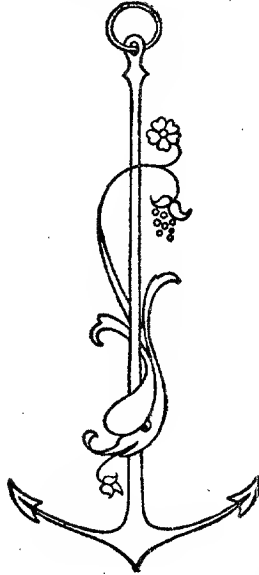


TINKER TWO

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**Tinker Two**  
**FURTHER ADVENTURES OF**  
**THE ADMIRABLE TINKER**  
**BY EDGAR JEPSON**



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## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. TINKER PLAYS THE HUMAN SLEUTHHOUND . . .	7
II. THE OPENING OF THE CAMPAIGN . . . . .	19
III. A SHORT WAY WITH KIDNAPERS . . . . .	45
IV. MR. RICHARD BRAND APPEALS TO THE LAW OF HIS COUNTRY . . . . .	57
V. TINKER RETIRES TO THE CONTINENT . . . . .	77
VI. THE ISLAND AND THE PIRATE . . . . .	101
VII. THE STRAYED EMPERORS . . . . .	124
VIII. THE TRIUMPH OF MR. OLIVER BROWN . . . .	144
IX. THE INTERVENTION OF THE POLICE . . . . .	165
X. TINKER ASSUMES THE RESPONSIBILITY OF A PARENT . . . . .	189
XI. TINKER PROVES A DETERMINED PARENT . . .	213
XII. THE BITERS NEARLY BIT . . . . .	234
XIII. THE DISAPPOINTMENT OF HIRAM ARNOTT . .	255
XIV. TINKER GIVES A GREAT EXPERT A LITTLE JOB	278

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## TINKER TWO

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## CHAPTER ONE

### TINKER PLAYS THE HUMAN SLEUTHHOUND

ONE afternoon last May Hildebrand Anne Beauleigh strolled down the end of Piccadilly and turned into the Park, the charming smile of a seraph playing about his lips cut in so perfect a Cupid's bow. He crossed the Row and strolled up by the side of it, the very picture of a careless child enjoying the sunlight and the summer. But as he moved through the polite throng his sunny blue eyes surveyed it with trained, observant glances which missed nothing. It had always been a principle with his father, Sir Tancred Beauleigh, to train his little son's powers of observation with patient care; and though since his marriage with Dorothy Rainer, the daughter of the American millionaire, their wandering and adventurous life had come to an end, and there had been fewer occasions for their use, he had by no means suffered them to grow rusty, while Hilde-

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brand Anne's personal need to get out of many scrapes had supplemented the parental care.

He met many acquaintances as he strolled along. All of them greeted him with the pleased, expectant smile which welcomes the purveyor of mirth. Several of them stopped and addressed him by the name of Tinker, a grimy name quite out of keeping with his admirably cut Eton suit, his spotless white waistcoat and linen, his unflecked silk hat.

Halfway up the Row two striking figures, striking by reason of their inappropriateness to the scene, caught his quick eye and brought him to a stop. Mr. Richard Brand, gentleman—to take him at his own fond valuation—and Mr. Oliver Brown, also gentleman, but more particularly private detective, were leaning over the rails, watching the polite world pass in its carriages and motors. They were surveying it with the air of persons in their proper *milieu*; for a fortunate discovery about a foolish young man from Oxford, whom Mr. Richard Brand had been sharpening at billiards, had filled their pockets with hush-money; and they were glorious with a spring bloom of new clothes. It was not the unattractive, beery redness of Mr. Richard Brand's face, of which the straggling mus-

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tache hid far too little, or the ineffable greasiness of the unwholesome complexion of Mr. Oliver Brown, or his beady little black eyes which his hooked nose failed to keep far enough apart, that awoke Tinker's vivid interest. It was this spring bloom of new clothes. They were too glorious by far. Their wearers had lacked that fineness of perception which should have shown them that the Soho outfitter to whom they had confided the adornment of their persons had decked them out with an Oriental floridity out of keeping with this polite English scene. The broad brims of their so shiny hats were, from the point of view of twentieth-century fashion, genuine antiques; the long, flowing skirts of their frock coats were hardly less nineteenth-century; and the firmly checked trousers of Mr. Richard Brand should rather have been in the ten shilling ring of suburban race course, concealing the lower half of a robustious welcher.

Tinker leaned against the rails a few paces away and considered them with an almost loving eye. It was plain to him that there were possibilities of amusement in this well assorted pair, that did they by any mischance become a prey to the passion of anger, they would prove diverting beyond ordinary men; and he cudgeled

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his brains to devise the needful mischance. From the scraps of their talk which came to his ears, he gathered that their remarks on the polite world were of the kind which gentlemen of their kidney consider facetious and the rest of the world offensive; and he grew yet more desirous that they should amuse him by a display of their angry passions.

Suddenly Mr. Richard Brand stopped short in the middle of a guffaw provoked by a witticism of his friend; clutched Mr. Oliver Brown's arm; and shaking it, cried, "Why, there's Elsie! Who's that woman? That one in the victoria?"

Tinker turned sharply to see his stepmother, Dorothy, and his adopted sister, Elsie Brand, driving past them on the further side of the Row.

Mr. Oliver Brown looked across at them, too, and said, "That's—that's—let me see—yes; it's Lady Beauleigh, the daughter of Septimus Rainer, the American millionaire."

"Lady Beauleigh! The millionairess! And Elsie's with her?"

"Elsie? Elsie?" said Mr. Oliver Brown struggling with his memory. "Oh, of course, she was the brat you had living with you for

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a time, your brother's daughter. Was that her with Lady Beauleigh? How did she get there? Look here, what became of her? I never heard." He had suddenly grown eager.

"Well, I had to take her with me to Monty Carlo: I'd nowhere to leave her here. And when that swindling bank cleared me out—well, I'm a man of the world, and I just left her to it to support," said Mr. Richard Brand, looking fiercely round as if he were rebutting a charge of some kind.

"Quite right; quite right; as a man of the world you did the right thing," said Mr. Oliver Brown with firm approval. "And I'll bet that this Beauleigh woman picked her up, and adopted her, or something."

Of a sudden Tinker saw his round, greasy face flush, his nostrils dilate, his little pig's eyes open and widen. He slapped his hand down on the railing with a force that split his yellow kid glove all round the thumb, and cried, "Why, hang it all! There's money in this!"

"Money in it?" cried Mr. Richard Brand, all the man of the world afire within him.

"Yes: don't you see? These rich women will pay anything for a whim. You're the legal guardian of your brother's child. If Lady

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Beauleigh wants to keep the brat, she must pay for her!"

"By Jove, you *are* smart!" said Mr. Richard Brand, all aglow. "To think that after all there's money in that brat!"

"I thought you went to Monty Carlo on the money you got out of the sale of her father's belongings?"

"Oh, that! Ninety-seven pounds ten! What was that?" said Mr. Richard Brand, with gentlemanly scorn.

"'Ush!" said Mr. Oliver Brown, looking furtively round. "'Ush! Not so loud!" And he was silent, pondering.

Tinker was indeed startled; and his interest in the two rogues had grown vividly personal. This beery-faced, welcher-looking person was Elsie's uncle, the rascal who had neglected and ill-treated her, and at last deserted her at Monte Carlo, where Tinker had found and adopted her as his sister with his father's consent. They had sometimes considered what their course of action should be, should he ever turn up, but they had not pursued the subject far because the mere thought of his turning up frightened Elsie.

Now he had turned up with a vengeance.

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He sidled along the rails up to Mr. Richard Brand's back, hidden by him from the keener eyes of his friend, so that when that worthy broke his thoughtful silence, though he spoke in a low voice, he heard every word he said.

"We must move slow but sure," he began. "The first thing to do is to get the brat into our 'ands. That ought to be easy enough. They don't know you've found her. She's sure to go out alone sometimes—or if she does go out with a nurse or Lady Beauleigh, they'll 'and her over to her uncle if he's firm." He grinned evilly. "But it's when we'er got 'er, that the real game begins. We won't make it too comfortable for her—nothing for the society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children to get hold of, of course; but a little shutting up, and not too much food, and an occasional smacking to dot the i's. She'll write letters with tear-blobs on them."

"She knows the feel of my hand," said Mr. Richard Brand, with a grin.

"And I—yes, I'll sympathize with her against her crool uncle, and see that the letters are touching. Lord, we shall get three times as much that way!"

"You're a regular Napoleon! Hanged if

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you ain't!" said Mr. Richard Brand, his silly, beery face alight with enthusiastic admiration.

"The first thing is to get in touch—to get in touch," said Mr. Oliver Brown in his deepest voice, and with all the air of the Man of Destiny he could assume.

"That's it. Get in touch," said Mr. Richard Brand, with the sapience of a parrot.

"It's lucky for you you've got a friend as knows the game. Why, you might 'ave taken a couple of 'undred in settlement of all claims!"

"Yes; it is a bit of luck."

"But mind you, it's going to be 'alves!" said Mr. Oliver Brown, with a sudden fierceness.

"'Alves, or I wash my 'ands of the job! And fixed legally, with a proper deed."

"Yes, yes; of course. But this is dry work, this planning. Let's adjourn. We can talk quite as well in a saloon bar."

They walked slowly up the Row to Oxford Street, and Tinker followed them. They went into the first public-house; and he patrolled up and down in front of it. His mind was made up not to lose sight of them till he had learned where Richard Brand lived. The main thing was to prevent them getting Elsie into their hands; and he smiled a grim smile, or rather

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the smile would have been grim, had his seraph's face lent itself to grimness, at the remembrance of Mr. Oliver Brown's declaration that that would be easy. But should they by any chance accomplish that purpose, it would be as well to know her uncle's lair.

He did not expect to compass that end easily, and the event justified his expectation. Gentlemen of Mr. Richard Brand's kind do not spend their time at home. The two friends spent half an hour in the public-house, and another two and a quarter hours in their progress down Oxford Street to the bottom of the Tottenham Court Road. They divided that time with the strictest impartiality between public-houses on both sides of that thoroughfare. Tinker patrolled up and down on the further side of the road before each with stubborn patience. For an hour, indeed, he enjoyed himself thoroughly; he saw himself quite distinctly in the part of the human sleuthhound. But at the end of an hour he began to wish that he were on the track of a speedier quarry of less sedentary habits, to make the chase more lively; and he was glad indeed when at last the two friends betook themselves to the grill-room of Frascati's.

He took a seat at a table near them, and heard

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them order steaks and fried onions. He chose his dinner with the care of one who has some knowledge of the art of dining, soup, a grilled sole, and a sweet. Then he asked for a telegraph form, and sent a wire to Dorothy, his stepmother, to inform her that he would not be home till late. The waiter who had at first been disposed to treat him with some carelessness, was taught very quickly that he was dealing with an accomplished child of the world, and became all respect. Having ordered his dinner, dispatched the wire, and tamed the waiter, Tinker was free to turn his attention to the two friends. It was plain that Mr. Richard Brand had vine-leaves in his hair; it was no less plain that he was not wearing them like a gentleman. He was in an arrogant vein. He bullied the waiter; he talked loudly and boastfully, now of his relationships with the chief families of Somerset, now of exploits at billiards. At intervals he condoled with Mr. Oliver Brown, in the most condescending fashion, now on the humbleness of his origin, now on his poor skill at that game.

For his part, Mr. Oliver Brown paid little attention to the vapping of his friend. He was absorbed in his dinner; and presently it

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became plain, from the voracity with which he ate and the quantity he devoured, that food was very dear to him. Tinker ate his dinner with a good appetite and a growing ease of mind. The more he saw of them, the poorer grew his opinion of the rogues' capacity. Indeed, towards the end of dinner he was giving as much of his attention to the diners at other tables as he was to them. He observed, however, that though he made great play with beer, Mr. Richard Brand ate but little. His delicate appetite brought into greater prominence the extraordinary powers of his companion, whose massive jaws moved without ceasing. Tinker was obliged to eat two ices after his sweet to keep in touch with him. At last the massive jaws ceased their steady champing; and Mr. Oliver Brown leaned back in his chair with a sonorous sigh, took from his case a black cigar of a singularly oily texture, lighted it, and surveyed the room with the dull, lack-luster eyes of repletion.

On the instant Mr. Richard Brand showed himself brisk and eager for diversion.

"Come on, let's go to the Tottenham," he said. "We shall find lots of the boys at the Tottenham."

His friend stared at him heavily a moment,

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then nodded. Mr. Richard Brand summoned the waiter, but had to wait while Tinker paid his bill. When the waiter came to them, there was a friendly altercation about who should not pay for the dinner, either of them pressing the hospitable office on the other. Presently Mr. Oliver Brown showed little energy in the matter; he was content to shake his head slowly. Mr. Richard Brand grew unbecomingly heated to no purpose: he paid the bill.

They walked out arm in arm, or rather Mr. Richard Brand held his friend's arm tightly to steady his lurching steps. Tinker, once more the human sleuthhound, followed them.

They turned into the Tottenham. Tinker was checked at the box office. The clerk, an untrained, unobservant man, failed utterly to perceive that he was dealing with a human sleuthhound, and said that children unattended by grown relatives or friends were not admitted. At once Tinker dropped the dreadful air of the human sleuthhound and became his engaging self. He pleaded that uncle—he did not specify whose uncle, but left the term generic—was inside. The clerk handed him a ticket, and he went in. Short as had been the delay, he found the two friends already at a bar, in the middle

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of a group of gentlemen of the same kidney as themselves, bookmakers of the welching variety, billiard sharpers, card sharpers, and professors of the confidence trick. To hear their talk and obtain information about his quarry's habits, he ordered a bottle of lemonade, and stood at the bar to drink it. They were talking of horse-racing, the sport of kings. They talked of it with a heavy but by no means intelligent seriousness. He endured it as long as he could, then he moved to a position a few yards away, from which he could keep one eye on the stage and the other on the sporting coterie. At times he moved back to them to hear that they were talking of horse-racing, the sport of kings. During his observation he had reason to amend his opinion of the incapacity of Mr. Oliver Brown. He perceived that he drank with everyone, but never by any chance paid for drinks; he perceived, too, that the rest of the little sporting coterie treated him with some degree of the deference accorded to superior qualities. Tinker ended by suspecting him to be the most able rogue in the coterie.

Half the evening had worn fruitlessly away, and Tinker was listening with some wonder to the yells of an Americo-European comedienne,

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which lost in point what they gained in tunelessness, when the noise of an altercation brought him back to the little band of sportsmen. He found that Mr. Richard Brand had paid for drinks with a sovereign, and while his back was turned one of his friends had in a curious, absent-minded way picked up the change, put it in his pocket, and forgotten all about it. At least he was denying having done anything of the kind with unswerving firmness. Mr. Richard Brand went into the matter with greater and greater heat; and at last so far forgot the proprieties as to lay violent hands on the friend with a view to jogging his weak memory. At once there appeared on the scene an official in uniform, weighing not less than two hundred pounds avoirdupois, who said to Mr. Richard Brand, "Now then—outside!" seized him by the scruff of the neck, and thrust him struggling and protesting toward a side-door. His friends seemed to take little or no interest in his deportation; from their manner one might have gathered that this was his usual way of leaving places of entertainment. But Tinker followed the said cortège with interested alacrity, and saw the official propel the unfortunate gentleman into space with a boot larger even than those affected

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by policemen. Mr. Richard Brand darted swiftly forward and sat down vigorously.

Tinker stood over him and said, "Are you much hurt?"

"Not a bit—not a bit—always get off busshes like that," said Mr. Richard Brand mournfully; and picking up his hat, and settling it on his head, he rose slowly, and took his way down the street. Also he took most of the street for his way. Fortunately, it was a side street and empty. He turned out of it down another side street, and yet another. Several times Tinker heard him murmur sadly, "Good ol' Dick Bran'—one o' the besht."

They passed several public-houses; but the shock of his exit from the Tottenham seemed to have damped his fine spirit. He entered none of them. He turned into another sordid little side street, and halfway down it stopped at a house and tried to open the door. He fumbled at it for a while, and said "Lashkey' sh-shwol-len. Musht have got damp."

As he said it, the door opened and he plunged head foremost into his home. From the clatter he seemed to have buried himself beneath the ruins of a hatstand. But presently he got free of them, and slammed the door.

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Tinker noted that the number was 13; then he ascertained that the name of the street was Budge Street. With a sigh of relief at having done playing the human sleuthhound to such a sordid quarry, he made his way out of the dirty side streets into Oxford Street, and took a cab home.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### THE OPENING OF THE CAMPAIGN

AS he drove home, Tinker had a little time to consider the happenings of the evening; and he was not long making up his mind that the bad news of Richard Brand's appearance could very well wait till the morrow. Therefore he stopped the cab at the corner of Berkeley Square, walked along to his home, and let himself in very quietly. From the silence of the house he gathered that his father and Dorothy were out; and he went softly upstairs to his room. But for all his quietness Elsie, who was lying awake waiting for his return, heard him; and slipping on her dressing-gown came into his room. She looked very fair and frail, and the mass of her hair shone with but a faint golden luster in the bleaching electric light.

"Where have you been?" she said. "Did you meet the Gavells and go home with them? Dorothy said it was most likely."

"No; I've been hunting a man down," said Tinker, with the sleuthhound air.

"Hunting a man down! Oh, I wish I'd been there! It must have been splendid!" said Elsie, with suddenly shining eyes.

"It wouldn't have done at all," said Tinker, with decision. "He kept me hanging about Oxford Street for nearly three hours. Then he finished up at the Tottenham Music-hall. You wouldn't have liked it a bit."

"I suppose I shouldn't. That's the worst of being a girl. I do hate it!" said Elsie, with some bitterness.

"But—but—you're a very nice girl," said Tinker generously.

"That's all very well," said Elsie, shaking her head. "But you'd like me ever so much better if I were a boy."

"Should I?" said Tinker, pondering the matter. "I never thought of that—and—and—I don't believe I should."

"Oh, yes, you would. I could go everywhere with you then."

"Yes, of course," said Tinker slowly and thoughtfully. "There is that. But—but—all the same I don't believe I should care for it. You wouldn't like me to be a girl, would you?"

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"Oh, no!" cried Elsie, with the most fervent conviction.

"Well, then, why should I want you to be a boy?—No: I like you best as you are."

"You do, really?" said Elsie, brightening.

"Perhaps after all it's just as well then." And she sighed. "But did you catch him?"

"No: I wasn't trying to. But I tracked him to his lair," said Tinker, once more the human sleuthhound of romance.

"Who was it?"

"I'll tell you all about it to-morrow," said Tinker, dropping hastily his sleuthhound air.

"Look here, hadn't you better go to bed? You'll be awfully tired in the morning, don't you know?"

"I suppose I better had," said Elsie. "But I couldn't get to sleep till you were home."

She kissed him, and went to her room. In ten minutes he was sleeping the sleep of the just.

They were all breakfasting together when Tinker broached the subject of Mr. Richard Brand's appearance.

"I saw Elsie's uncle yesterday," he said.

"You did?" said Sir Tancred sharply; and Elsie's eyes opened wide and round with dismay.

"Yes; and the worst of it is, he saw Elsie

—with Dorothy, and he knows who Dorothy is. At least his friend did.”

“Do I know his friend then?” said Dorothy.

“Rather not! They’re awful outsiders—regular bad hats,” said Tinker.

“What did they say when they saw her?” said Sir Tancred.

“They talked of making Dorothy pay. But of course if anyone paid, it would be me, because Elsie belongs to me. Not that I’m going to pay. Her disgusting uncle has no right to Elsie at all. He deserted her; and he’s not going to get her,” said Tinker firmly.

“I don’t know the law of the matter,” said Sir Tancred. “But it’s sure to be absurd. I expect it gives him a right to her.”

“I don’t care about the law. He hasn’t got any real right to her,” said Tinker. “Why, look how badly he treated her when she was living with him, keeping her shut up in beastly lodgings all the time. He’s no right to her at all.”

“You’re talking about equity, not law. I’m quite of your opinion that her uncle shan’t have her. But I think we’d better find out exactly how we stand with regard to the law. After all, it can make itself very objectionable, you know. We’ll go and see Morell this morning

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and hear what he says about it," said Sir Tancred.

"Whatever should I do, if uncle did get hold of me?" said Elsie.

But she showed very little dismay at the danger confronting her; she had too great a trust in Tinker and Sir Tancred.

"He won't," said Tinker. "And if he did, you'd only have to run away. We will make a plan, or two or three plans, ready in case he should."

"Yes; I could always do that, with you to help," said Elsie cheerfully.

Tinker had been careful to say nothing of Mr. Oliver Brown's plan to ill-treat her in order that she might write more pathetic letters. But after breakfast he told Sir Tancred of it.

"If I get a ghost of a chance, I'll give the two hounds a thrashing they'll never forget," said Sir Tancred quietly.

"I'll see you get the chance, sir—somehow," said Tinker.

Sir Tancred laughed gently: "I'm sure you will," he said.

They charged Elsie not to stir out of the house till their return; and drove down to the lawyer's.

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Sir Tancred Beauleigh was a friend as well as a client of Mr. Morell, who during the extravagant years before his marriage to Dorothy Rainer had extricated him from the many difficulties incident to the life of an adventurous young baronet whose income is out of proportion to his passion for distraction.

He shook hands warmly with Sir Tancred, and said:

"Hullo, Tinker, my child of the world, have you come to put your Sherlock Holmes training at my disposal? I've two or three cases in which your services would prove invaluable. When are you going to start practicing?"

"My father won't let me," said Tinker mournfully. "Not at present, that is."

"And you find yourself wasted on the social life. Very natural—very natural. You ought to let him begin, Beauleigh. There's nothing like beginning young at anything."

"Tinker is going into the Diplomatic Service," said Sir Tancred.

"A great waste—a great waste. There are hundreds, thousands of diplomats, but precious few really useful detectives."

"Oh, it's much the same thing," said Sir Tancred.

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"Not a bit of it. Diplomacy's all office work—piffing office work. Once in seven years there's something delicate turns up, and it's muddled by a peer. You let him be a detective—you've trained him for it, you know."

"Hardly. He's had a general training in the use of his wits—that's all," said Sir Tancred, smiling.

"Well, well, it's better than most trainings." Then the look of cheery *bonhomie* faded suddenly from his face, leaving it very shrewd; and he said, "What have you come to see me about?"

"Tinker had better tell you the story," said Sir Tancred.

Thereupon Tinker told the lawyer of the recognition of Elsie, of Mr. Oliver Brown's plan for extorting blackmail from Lady Beaulleigh, and of his tracking Richard Brand to his home.

Morell asked him half a dozen questions, then he said, "I take it you don't intend to give the child up to her uncle."

"No, I won't give her up. He deserted her, and I adopted her. She belongs to me, not him," said Tinker.

"And I take it you don't want to pay her uncle

for her, which would be the simplest way to deal with the matter, Beauleigh."

"No: I should have to pay. Elsie belongs to me, you know. And I don't see why I should. Her uncle deserted her; and he hasn't any right to her, or to any money for her," said Tinker.

"I'm afraid the law gives him a very strong right. But I suppose you want to fight."

"Yes, I want to stop him getting her," said Tinker.

"Well, as long as you keep possession of Elsie, you are in a strong position. If once these blackmailers get hold of her, you'll have to buy her of them. You throw the burden of appealing to the law on them; and this man Brand will make a poor show in the witness box. I don't think there is much chance of his failing; but there is a chance, and it's worth taking. The matter of the £97.10 he stole from her will tell against him. Also a blackmailer needs to have a very clean record, and he very seldom has anything of the kind. I will have the past life of these two rascals, especially Brand's, looked into carefully. It is quite likely we may be able to choke him off. But, whatever you do, don't let them get hold of your adopted sister."

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"I think we can see to that," said Sir Tancered. "They hardly sound the sort of people to attempt a violent abduction."

"Well, I'll put one of my men on to Richard Brand of 13 Budge Street at once."

They thanked him, and bade him good day. On their return home they held a council and decided that there was no immediate need to take Elsie away from London, that it would be well that the blackmailers should waste some time forming and trying to execute a plan to seize her there. When that had come to nothing, they would give them the chance of wasting some more time on a no less futile plan to seize her in the country. Tinker and Elsie spent the rest of the day very pleasantly arranging an elaborate system of signals by which members of the family, and Elsie's maid and Tinker's old nurse, Selina, the only servant whom they informed of the danger, might warn one another of the presence of the blackmailing abductors. Also they made themselves uncommonly grimy, exploring the roof, in a vain attempt to find an outlet to safety over the heights. At dinner Tinker said some very bitter things about modern houses and modern architecture, pointing out how much easier they

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would have been in mind at this juncture, had the house been fitted with the simple device of a secret chamber or priest's hole.

Next day and the day after Tinker went out at all hours between nine in the morning and ten at night, and made a short progress about the neighborhood of the house. Also he and Elsie took it in turns to keep watch from the windows. On the third day their efforts were rewarded by the sight of Mr. Oliver Brown, looking very like a photographer's assistant, strolling past the house on the other side of the road. They watched him from behind a curtain from 11 o'clock till noon. He strolled up and down, giving himself all the airs of a man expecting someone to keep an appointment with him. He looked at his watch many times with an air of growing impatience; now and again he affected to see the expected one in the distance and hurried to meet him. Had they not known what he was there for, they would never have suspected him of watching the house. At noon he changed his tactics; he crossed the road and became a brisk wayfarer, as brisk a wayfarer, that is, as his obesity permitted. He paraded a stretch of pavement extending forty yards on either side of the house at a quick

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march. Between noon and one o'clock he must have walked three miles. At one o'clock he began to keep another appointment: this time at the corner of the square. At half-past one he took a paper bag from his pocket and began to eat. By the aid of Sir Tancred's race-glasses they discovered that he was eating sausage-rolls. He ate them slowly, looking towards the Beauleigh house. When he had eaten them, he took another paper bag from his other pocket, and began to eat again: the race-glasses assured them that he was eating jam tarts. When he had finished them, he took a large flask from his pocket, and drank.

It was now plain that he was beginning the process of getting in touch by making sure that Elsie dwelt in the Beauleigh house. The two children went down to lunch, sure that they would find him awaiting them after it. They told Sir Tancred and Dorothy about Mr. Oliver Brown and his morning's work. After lunch Sir Tancred came to the windows with them to get a look at the watcher. At first they could not see him; then they found that he had changed his ground, and was keeping watch from the corner on the other side of the house. As Sir Tancred went down to his club, he passed

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him close and had a careful look at him. All the afternoon Mr. Oliver Brown hung about, and when the evening came he had learned nothing. But he had succeeded in stamping an ineffaceable image of himself on the minds of both Tinker and Elsie, so that they would never fail to recognize his drooping figure at any distance at which it came really into sight. At half-past eight he seemed to give up hope of seeing Elsie that day; they saw him hail a cab and drive away in it.

Tinker, with his usual care of Elsie's health, hurried her into a cab; they drove to the Park, and took a brisk walk. As they walked Tinker discussed carefully the methods of the watcher, and came to the conclusion that considering the difficulty of watching a house in the middle of Berkeley Square, Mr. Oliver Brown was a very good human sleuthhound. Then he set himself to consider how to prevent his watching the house. He was not long finding a way; and the next morning when Mr. Oliver Brown began to keep an appointment on the other side of the road, he went out of the house by the back way, and coming into the square from the further end, walked up to the policeman on the beat.

The policeman greeted him smiling, for Tin-

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ker was a valued acquaintance with whom he had had many interesting talks. Tinker made the proper inquiries as to the health of the policeman, his wife, and his baby; then he said:

"I came to tell you that there's a man hanging about the Square whom you'd like to keep an eye on, I think. He doesn't look the kind of person we want in this neighborhood; and he was hanging about all day yesterday."

The policeman's face brightened. He was eager to show himself an efficient officer, with a view to early promotion; and in this quiet, rich neighborhood he got but a few chances: "Show me him, sir," he said briskly.

Tinker led the way along the railings, and across a corner of the gardens he pointed out the unsuspecting Mr. Oliver Brown.

"He'll pretend to be waiting for someone till twelve," he said. "Then he'll walk up and down pretending to be going through the Square. Then he'll just hang about. I saw him yesterday."

"I see," said the policeman.

They watched Mr. Oliver Brown keeping his appointment for a minute or two, then the policeman said, "I'll go and take a look at 'im,

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sir. And I'm much obliged to you for pointing 'im out. 'E don't look up to no good."

"I thought you'd think so," said Tinker. "If you'd been on duty here yesterday morning, you'd have spotted him at once."

The policeman was pleased by the tribute, and smiled as he walked off. Tinker stood still and watched him pass Mr. Oliver Brown; then he went round, into the house through the garden, and up to the window. For half an hour nothing happened. Twice the policeman walked past Mr. Oliver Brown, then he came up to him a third time, and stopped. They saw Mr. Oliver Brown squirm round the guardian of the law in explanations for two or three minutes with gestures that grew more and more lively, then he began to walk off, turning round twice to protest. On his second protest the policeman started to walk briskly after him. Mr. Oliver Brown hurried out of the Square.

"That's the first score to us," said Tinker, with a seraphic smile. "He'll have to get someone else to watch the house now; and we can go out safely. He won't get anyone just at once."

They went out, and did not come in till lunch. All the afternoon they watched for an emissary

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of the blackmailers; but they saw no one whom they could believe to be watching the house. The next morning was likewise a blank; and they began to grow impatient. But Mr. Oliver Brown, chagrined by the policeman's interruption, had changed his plan. At half-past twelve a footman brought up a small brown paper packet, addressed to Miss Elsie Brand, which had just been left at the house. She opened it and found it to be a cardboard box containing a large egg of an inferior make of chocolate.

"Why, whoever sent me this?" she said.

"It's from your uncle and his friend, of course. What a duffer I was not to think of it, and tell Marmaduke not to take anything in addressed to you!" said Tinker, with an air of deep disgust.

"Oh, you can't be expected to think of everything," said Elsie in her most soothing tone.

"I might have thought of that, though," said Tinker, still disgusted. "It was such a simple thing." He took a few steps up and down the room; then he added, "Of course it doesn't make much difference, because they were sure to find out you were here sooner or later. Only I did want to give them a lot more trouble."

He was somewhat disconsolate for the rest of

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the day, but was cheered by the fact that there was no longer any need for Elsie to remain cooped up in the house.

For the next ten days nothing happened. Tinker kept up his careful watch, and often he saw Mr. Oliver Brown and Mr. Richard Brand lingering about the lower outlets from the Square. Mr. Oliver Brown had continued the process of getting in touch by becoming intimate with one of Sir Tancred's under housemaids, and had learned a good deal of Elsie's comings and goings from her. He and his friend were always about looking for the chance of pouncing on her walking with Lady Beauleigh. But they were balked in their design by the fact that she never walked anywhere in the neighborhood of Berkeley Square.

Times and again she passed them in one of the Beauleigh carriages, or motor cars, or in a cab. Mr. Oliver Brown began to develop some of the feelings of the Socialist and talked with unfeigned bitterness about the pampered plutocrats who never used the legs Nature had given them, but always rolled in their own carriages.

At the end of an unsatisfactory fortnight his spirit began to chafe against this ineffectual

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watching. It longed for strong measures. At last his intellect gave it rein; and he said to Mr. Richard Brand, with his best Napoleonic air, "The time has come to act."

"That's what I've been thinking myself," said Mr. Richard Brand, who never thought at all.

"To-morrow—to-morrow we'll go to this Beauleigh woman and come straight to the point."

"Right you are," said Mr. Richard Brand.

On the morrow, therefore, on her return from the Park, Dorothy was greeted by the butler with the unwelcome tidings that Mr. Richard Brand and another gentleman were waiting in the drawing-room to see her on an important matter of business. At first she was for refusing to see them; and referring them to Sir Tancred, then the desire to impart to Mr. Richard Brand her opinion of his desertion of his niece prevailed and she went into the drawing-room.

On the instant Mr. Oliver Brown, with a florid, taproom grace, introduced Mr. Richard Brand to her. Mr. Richard Brand tried to shake her warmly by the hand, but since she put it behind her back, failed. He stood wagging his arm vaguely in a veritable aura of beer; and

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Dorothy said, "Well, my man, what do you want?"

Her tone was indeed damping; but undismayed, with his finest man-of-the-world air, and in his oiliest voice, Mr. Oliver Brown said, "My friend, Mr. Brand, is delighted to have found his dear little niece Elsie again. He's been worried to death about her for months. He left her in the gardens of the Casino at Monty Carlo while he went into the rooms to have a little flutter, as a gentlemen will, and when he came out, he could not find her. He hunted everywhere—everywhere. He made inquiries, and when he was called to England by important business, he put the matter into the hands of a Private Enquiry Office, and he's spent no end of money on it—fabulous sums."

"Quite fabulous," said Dorothy scornfully.

"The harass and worry and suspense have made another man of him," Mr. Oliver Brown went on more quickly. "I've noticed the change——"

"No one knows what it's been," said Mr. Richard Brand solemnly.

"Then the other day he learned that she had been so fortunate as to fall into your hands, and he was overjoyed—overjoyed. He nearly

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went out of his mind with joy. He's been so upset that I wouldn't let him come to you before to-day, though he kept saying, 'Let me fly to me little Elsie at once!' I was firm; I was afraid of the shock. But to-day I thought him well enough to fetch her; and he's come."

"But suppose Elsie does not wish to go with him?" said Dorothy, with a coldness which seemed to show her sadly insensible to this touching picture of avuncular affection.

"Not want to go with her uncle! Her poor old uncle who's so fond of her! Has the child been set against me?" cried Mr. Richard Brand, who had been coached for the part.

As ill luck would have it, the words were hardly off his lips when the door opened and in came Elsie herself. She had seen Dorothy return and had come down to her. She was half-way across the room before she recognized her uncle, and stopped short with a little cry of dismay.

"Why, it's my little Elsie! Well, Elsie, aren't you glad to see your poor old uncle again?" cried Mr. Richard Brand with vociferous affection.

Elsie said no word, and showed less gladness. She slipped to the side of Dorothy.

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Dorothy was vexed that she should have thus run into the lion's jaws; but she said, "Well, here is your niece to speak for herself. Elsie, your uncle says that he did not desert you at Monte Carlo, but hunted and made inquiries everywhere for you, that he's very fond of you, and has been greatly upset by losing you."

"It's all lies," said Elsie with a directness acquired by association with Tinker.

"Lies? Dear, dear! I'm shocked! Horrified! Your good uncle who's so fond of you!" cried Mr. Oliver Brown, and he began to sidle round between her and the door.

"Well, your uncle proposes that you should go with him. What do you say?" said Dorothy.

"He isn't fond of me! And it isn't true he hunted for me at Monte Carlo! I was in the gardens all the time! I don't want to go with him!" cried Elsie.

"That settles it," said Dorothy.

"Pardon me, my dear Lady, pardon me!" cried Mr. Oliver Brown. "As a friend of both parties, I must point out that that doesn't settle it at all! Her uncle is her legal guardian; and if you keep her from him, you will do a very dangerous thing. It's abduction—a criminal offense."

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Dorothy was taken aback: she knew that Mr. Morell had been more than doubtful of their right to keep Elsie; and Mr. Oliver Brown's statement sounded very convincing. She looked doubtfully from one rascal to the other.

"I don't leave this house without my niece!" blustered Mr. Richard Brand, brave as a lion since he was dealing with a woman; and he advanced on Elsie.

Elsie clutched Dorothy's arm, and got behind her, crying, "Oh, don't let him take me! I don't want to go with him!"

Mr. Oliver Brown was advancing from the other side to help his friend when the opening of the door made them pause; and in came Tinker.

Elsie ran across the room to him, and wringing her hands cried, "Oh, Tinker, I'm so glad you've come! It's Uncle Richard! He's come to take me away!"

There came a glint into Tinker's sunny blue eyes, as he put his arm round the frightened child and said, "Oh, he has, has he? And which of these—these rainbows is Uncle Richard?"

The yellow kid-gloved hands of the two gentlemen flew mechanically to their bright cravats, and their eyes flew to a mirror.

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"Be smart, Dick! We must get her out of the house! Then we're all right!" cried Mr. Oliver Brown, slipping between the children and the door.

Richard Brand rushed at his niece, and fell over the interposed foot of her protector, who whipped her behind the sofa, crying, "Ring, Dorothy! Ring!"

Dorothy darted to a bell, put her thumb on the button and kept it there.

Richard Brand was blundering round the sofa, but his friend cried, "Stop! Stop! We're done!"

He stopped, and Mr. Oliver Brown said to Lady Beauleigh, "We've had enough of this kind of thing. My friend is here to take away his niece; and we call on you to 'and her hover to 'im, hor we call in the polleece!" He spoke in his most impressive voice, with swelling dignity a little spoiled by the transposed h's.

"You won't have her!" said Tinker.

"I'm not speaking to you, my lad," said Mr. Oliver Brown, with a wave of the hand.

"I don't leave this house without her! Nothing will induce me to!" cried Mr. Richard Brand.

The door opened, and a young footman stood

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on the threshold and looked round the room in some surprise.

"Ah, Marmaduke, fetch Reginald, and throw those two men into the street. You needn't be afraid of hurting them," said Tinker.

Marmaduke looked at Dorothy, who nodded, then, an ardent student of the Sandowesque, proud of his thews, he expanded his chest, and said, "I can do it without Reginald's help, your ladyship."

"Then do it," said Dorothy.

The two friends flew together, exhibiting the same pasty whiteness of face, the same starting eyes, and Mr. Oliver Brown cried with a gasping shrillness, "We're going! We're going! Don't you dare to lay a finger on us, my man, or we'll summons you! Don't you dare to!" And with their faces towards Marmaduke the two friends sidled crablike towards the door.

"Let them go," said Dorothy sharply, for she had no wish for a scandal in the police-courts, and they nearly tumbled over one another in their indecorous haste to get out of the room.

Marmaduke and Tinker followed to see them bolt down the stairs and nearly wrench the latch off the front door in their eagerness to be gone.

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"You missed a chance there, Marmaduke," said Tinker sadly. "You ought to have jumped for them before you could be forbidden. I'm always telling you that those dumb-bells only make you slow, unless you do other things." And he went back into the drawing-room.

Elsie and Lady Beauleigh were sitting on the sofa, Elsie crying after her fright and Dorothy trying to comfort her. Tinker added his quota of comfort by thumping her gently on the back, a process he believed to be effective to stem the tears of the other sex, saying as he thumped, "Cheer up—cheer up—they're gone, and you're all right."

The process, or the exhortation, or both, seemed effective, for Elsie began to dry her pretty eyes.

But she sobbed as she said, "It's all—very well—for this time—b-b-ut you didn't hear what they said. They said—Uncle Richard was my legal guardian—and—and—they'll bring a policeman next time—and fetch me away."

"Not they!" said Tinker cheerfully. "They won't dare to get near the police—shady-looking bounders like that!"

"There's no need for you to bother about it,"

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said Dorothy earnestly. "I'm sure your uncle only wants money; and I can easily arrange it."

Tinker shook his head, and said, "I'm afraid that won't do. I can't let you pay, you know. I told you so. I adopted Elsie, and I'm responsible for her. She belongs to me. If there's any paying to be done, I must pay—or she won't belong to me *really* any longer."

Lady Beauleigh looked at her stepson, and stamped her foot in her vexation: "You're as bad as your father!" she cried, "I never knew such unreasonable people! Why shouldn't I spend my money on Elsie?"

"But you can't let a woman pay for things, don't you know?" Tinker protested, with a pained air.

"Nonsense! Why shouldn't a woman pay for things?" said Dorothy.

"You don't let them, you know," said Tinker.

"Are you discussing a question of morals?" said Sir Tancred, who had caught their last words through the open door, as he came into the drawing-room.

"It's the old question of money. First you won't let me spend it as I like, or rather you won't let me settle it on you to spend; and now

Tinker is refusing to let me spend it on Elsie," said Dorothy in half real, half humorous indignation.

"But I'm always telling you that I have lots of money—I'm rolling in money," said Sir Tancred.

"There's not much rolling to be got out of six hundred a year," said his wife.

"Oh, I roll—I roll," said Sir Tancred. "But what's this about Tinker?"

"Elsie's uncle has been here," said Dorothy. "And if you will excuse my saying it, Elsie, he's a very dreadful person——"

"Oh, he is!" said Elsie.

"And he tried to carry off Elsie. But it's only money he wants: I'm sure of it."

"He's no right to her or to any money," said Tinker firmly. "He deserted her, and didn't care what happened to her. I adopted her, and I've seen after her. She belongs to me."

"Of course I do," said Elsie.

"Oh, well: I hope you'll find the law agree with you," said Dorothy.

Tinker gazed at her; and a slow, seraphic smile parted his lips: "I dare say," he said slowly, "if we're careful, we shall get some fun out of the law."

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## CHAPTER THREE

### A SHORT WAY WITH KIDNAPPERS

THE next morning Tinker and Sir Tancred went down to Mr. Morell's offices and told him of the audacious attempt to carry off Elsie out of his house. Mr. Morell advised that since the rascals had grown so bold, it would be best to take her down to Beauleigh Court; for there she would be surrounded by a cordon of lodge-keepers, game-keepers, gardeners, and grooms, difficult to penetrate, and still more difficult to pass with the child on their hands. In London either Elsie could not walk out at all, or if she did, there was the danger that they would pounce on her, collect a sympathetic crowd round them, and carry her off.

"A sympathetic crowd would be a bit difficult, surely," said Sir Tancred. "They're not attractive persons."

"No: I don't think they'd have much difficulty about getting it sympathetic. A little ranting about the rich trying to rob the poor man

of his niece would do wonders," said Mr. Morell. "A crowd is always wrong-headed to start with."

Tinker nodded: "I've noticed that," he said gravely. "We'd better go."

"Very well; you shall," said Sir Tancred. "But the question is, ought I to go with you to look after you? I don't want to spoil Dorothy's fun. It's her first Season. But I could keep running up to Town."

"Oh, there isn't any need at all!" protested Tinker. "I've done more difficult things than this. Besides, this is my game, sir; and I don't want it to bother everybody else. It wouldn't be fair."

"I've no doubt that you could manage the matter perfectly," said Sir Tancred, hesitating. "But after all, it will require sustained watchfulness. It will be a severe strain on you before you've done with it, though it seems easy and rather fun now."

"I don't mind," said Tinker. "Besides, I can always wire for you, if those two sweeps turn up at Beauleigh."

"I think you can very well leave it in Tinker's hands for the present. Operating in the country these rascals will have to rely on them-

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selves alone. In town they may have a score of kindred spirits at their disposal," said Morell.

"Very well, we'll settle it so," said Sir Tancred.

They rose to go, and had already shaken hands with Morell, when he said, "By the way, so far my men have failed to discover anything in the conduct of this Brand which has qualified him for lodging in one of his Majesty's jails."

"That's a pity," said Tinker sadly.

"Oh, we haven't lost hope—not by any means," said Morell. "Good-by, good-by."

Three days later Tinker and Elsie went down to Beauleigh Court. As soon as they arrived Tinker set about organizing an intelligence bureau. He described the two blackmailers to all the gamekeepers, the lodge-keepers at the park gates, to the grooms, and to the constables of the villages round about, and made it fairly certain that he would have early tidings of the presence of Mr. Richard Brand and his friend in the neighborhood. Then they settled down to enjoy the pleasant country.

Warned by the attempt to carry her off from the house in Berkeley Square, he hardly let Elsie out of his sight. He had been used to disregard the law which forbids children to

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drive motor cars, and relying on the fact that he was a privileged person in the neighborhood, had motored about it in his car whenever the fancy took him. His experience of life, uncommonly varied and large for his years, assured him that did he take Elsie motoring with him, the car would inevitably break down at the very feet of her questing uncle. Therefore they spent most of their time in the Beauleigh woods, busied in many enchanting occupations from birds-nesting to brigandage.

Mr. Oliver Brown was not long learning from his friend, the kitchen maid, of the departure of the two children, and he hurried off to Mr. Richard Brand bubbling over with joy; "They've delivered themselves into our hands!" he cried. "They've sent the brat to the country; and we shall get hold of her as easy as winking! There's no crowds to collect in the country and interfere!"

The lawyer had overrated Mr. Oliver Brown's intelligent power of turning to account the humors of the crowd. On the other hand Mr. Oliver Brown had overrated the convenience of the country for kidnaping.

Two day later the two friends took the train to Micklefield, a town six miles from Beauleigh

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Court, and made it the base of their operations. They disguised themselves without any difficulty as commercial travelers, and in a hired dog-cart they made a slow round of the village inns about Beauleigh, under the pretense of introducing to the landlords a new and imaginary line of beer. When they reached an inn, they stayed there, taking their mid-day dinner and many, many drinks. They talked freely, and were talked to, and since Tinker's mischievous exploits had made his name frequent on the tongues of the country side, they learned his way of spending his time, and on their drives lingered about the Beauleigh woods.

They were seen by all the village constables whom Tinker had bidden inform him of their presence in the neighborhood, and by two or three gamekeepers. But in the rustic mind roguery and rags are so closely associated that it is hard indeed for it to conceive of the existence of the former without the latter. Mr. Oliver Brown's simple device of providing himself and his friend with such a plausible occupation, and their sleek and well-to-do appearance, blinded constables and gamekeepers alike to their exact likeness to the description given of them by Tinker.

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For ten days the two friends patrolled a circle round Beauleigh Court in their dogcart. Their Fortune favored them. One afternoon as they jogged slowly down a lane under a roof of arched bows, Tinker and Elsie came out of a gate in the wood.

Their coming was sudden, and Mr. Richard Brand, making a swift return to the days of his boyhood in the country, uttered a loud view halloa. There came a startled cry from Elsie. Tinker, chancing at the moment to be Robin Hood, cried, "Ha, Ha! The Sheriff of Nottingham! To our forest fastness, Maid Marian!" swung her back through the gate, and slammed it.

The two friends tumbled out of the dogcart and dashed through the gate, to find themselves in a broad aisle of the wood, and the children running hard with a fifty yards' start. It was of course the easiest thing in the world for two grown men to run down a little girl; but companionship with Tinker had made Elsie fleet of foot and enduring, for all her frail air.

Moreover, beer and again beer, beer by the glass, the pint, the quart and the gallon, is no respecter of the human wind; and at the end

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of three hundred yards Mr. Oliver Brown and Mr. Richard Brand had practical proof of this pathological fact. They were panting heavily, and the children were gaining. But with the honest doggedness of Englishmen when there is money to be made, they stuck to the chase. Then Tinker looked round; and his quick eye took in the exact state of the hunt.

In a moment Mr. Oliver Brown cried hoarsely, "They're flagging! Come on! We've got them!"

He was right; the children were going slower; and a spurt brought their pursuers to within forty yards of them. But they seemed unable to reduce that distance. At the end of three-quarters of a mile they were still forty yards apart, a fact much less strange than it seemed, seeing that Tinker was taking the greatest pains not to make it more. Of a sudden the children turned into a side-path. With leaden legs and bursting bosoms their pursuers followed them: their pace had fallen to the sorriest jog-trot. The path narrowed and narrowed; at last it ended, and the children plunged into the undergrowth. Their pursuers stumbled along after them, cheered always by the sight of Tinker's white straw hat a little

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way ahead. Then suddenly they were plunging with a growing momentum down the steep side of a hollow, and found themselves rushing through bushes thornier than ever they had dreamed grew in a temperate zone. They reached the bottom torn and yelling. When they looked for the guiding straw hat, the sight of it no longer cheered them. Human nature, undermined by beer, could endure no more; they threw themselves on the ground sobbing out objurgations.

The children went on at an easy trot to a clearing where stood the cottage of Andrew Beg, one of the under-keepers, and found him seated on a chair in front of his door, cleaning his gun.

"Oh, here you are, Andrew," said Tinker. "There are two men in Cringle's dell. They look like poachers from London. You'd better look after your pheasant eggs."

Andrew Beg, a very large, red young Scotchman, rose with a snort. His flush of anger turned him redder than you could dream a human being could be: he was more like a sunset. He had been lately imported from Scotland to this well-paid job; he had in full measure the national desire to do his work thoroughly; and

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he was furious at the thought of its being spoiled.

"I'll pooch them, Maister Tinker!" he cried, and strode off towards the dell.

On the instant Tinker again became Robin Hood. With a dark frown he said, "I go to compass the downfall of the minions of the oppressor. Meet me at the Outlaw's oak an hour hence."

"Oh, let me come with you!" said Elsie.

"Nay: it may not be," said Tinker. "These minions will make our merry Beauleigh glades ring with—with—language unfit for maiden's ears. And"—he added in his natural voice—"it wouldn't be quite nice for you."

"All right. I go to the Outlaw's oak," said Elsie reluctantly.

Tinker waved his hand, and ran after Andrew Beg.

Mr. Oliver Brown and Mr. Richard Brand had recovered enough to climb feebly out of Cringle's dell, and they stood on the edge of it debating which was the way out of the wood, when Andrew Beg, redly formidable, burst out upon them.

"Oh, keeper, we're very glad to see you," said Mr. Oliver Brown with dignified conde-

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scension. "I and my friend have lost our way in this confounded wood; and it'll be a shilling in your pocket if you show us the way out of it."

"Spawn o' the deil!" was all the Gaelic Andrew Beg vouchsafed them; and on the words he had them by the scruff of the neck, and was shoving them along. With one accord they began to struggle and protest; and he banged their heads together till they had a hazy notion that they were standing on them.

Tinker, his merry outlaw's face still clouded by the dark frown, joined them; and at the end of a hundred yards he said, "It would be well, Friar Andrew, to give these varlets a taste of our quality. Piper's pool is not far out of the way."

Andrew Beg was at the moment too full of conscientiousness to inquire into this sudden, and to a Presbyterian, unwelcome, promotion to the Roman Church; but he accepted the suggestion, and turned his captives off to the left.

At the sight of the slimy green surface and black mud round the edges of Piper's pool Mr. Oliver Brown burst again into protests, Mr. Richard Brand was simply objurgatory. Andrew Beg had only ears for the stern voice of duty. He dragged them to the edge of the steep

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bank, and flung them down it. They soured into the water, rose spluttering and cursing, slipping down again in the black mud, and at last crawled up the bank, soaked, bedraggled, and unspeakably disreputable. At the top Andrew again collected them by the scruffs of the neck, and holding them well away from his velveteens, marched them along. At the end of the wood Tinker opened the gate, and Andrew flung them through it. Tinker shut it, and leaning over it, said sternly, "Learn, varlets, the fate that awaits the oppressors of the poor in the glades of Beauleigh forest."

"If ever I get hold of you, my lad!" said Mr. Richard Brand faintly but thickly.

Tinker laughed gruffly; then he dropped the outlaw, and said gently, "You'd much better let us alone, you had really. I want Elsie; and I'm going to keep her. You know you haven't any right to her, because you deserted her. I see that the dogcart's gone, so you'd better walk sharply home so as not to catch cold, and think it over."

Sweet reason was the last straw; and the two friends outvied one another in a fury of abuse.

When breath failed them, Tinker said with the same gentleness, "Well, it's just as you like,

of course; there are heaps more pools if you want them. Good afternoon." And he turned and went his way with Andrew Beg.

It was indeed a fact that the dogcart had gone; the intelligent horse wearying of loneliness, and had trotted off home. For the first two miles of their chilly trudge to Micklefield the two friends wrangled expletively, either trying to fix the blame of their misfortunes on the other. The next two miles were a glowering silence. Then Mr. Richard Brand said, "If ever I do get hold of that brat, I'll take it out of her for this!"

"I'm with you in that, my boy!" cried Mr. Oliver Brown; then he added solemnly, "The time has come to appeal to the law of England for your rights."

"Oh, I say: don't let's have anything to do with the law of England!" said Mr. Richard Brand hurriedly.

"I'm not over and above fond of it myself. But it's the only way," said Mr. Oliver Brown; and he sighed.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### MR. RICHARD BRAND APPEALS TO THE LAW OF HIS COUNTRY

AS he walked back with him towards his cottage Tinker applauded warmly and at length the vigor and promptness with which Andrew Beg had dealt with the suspicious Londoners. In the pleasure of listening to the honied words the worthy young gamekeeper forgot the doubts aroused by the young master's parting talk with the blackmailers, doubts whether they were poachers at all, and grew assured of the propriety of throwing them into Piper's pool.

At the end of his panegyric Tinker bade him good day, and went off at a swift trot to the Outlaw's oak. There he found Elsie awaiting him. She had whiled away the time getting ready to make tea as soon as he should come; and the kettle was already singing on the spirit stove. Since in the long summer days they did not want to spend any more time than was needful at the Court itself, they kept tea, sugar,

cake, and biscuits, a kettle, a stove, and crockery in the hiding-place in the hollow of the oak; and every day half a pint of milk was left near by, in the hedge of the wood, by a dairymaid from a neighboring farm.

Tinker went into the oak and came out with a horn, on which he blew three blasts to summon his outlawed band to the meal. He talked with several of his merry but imaginary men, asking them what sport they had had in the chase, and the fruits of their watch on the high road. Then he dropped on the moss, and while Elsie set out the tea-things and cut the cake, he told to a large but invisible audience the tale of the muddy retribution he had brought down on the two blackmailers whom he described, mediævally, as the Sheriff of Nottingham and his posse. He told the tale with much spirit and joyfulness; and Elsie laughed with equal glee at his faithful picture of the bedraggled plight of their baffled pursuers. But at the end she turned very serious and said, "Poor Uncle Richard. I hope he won't catch a very bad cold."

The joy faded from Tinker's face, and a blankness stole over it; "Did you say *poor* Uncle Richard?" he said gently.

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"Yes," said Elsie.

"And did you say you hoped he *wouldn't* catch a bad cold?"

"Yes," said Elsie.

"You'd be really sorry if he caught a bad cold after trying to hunt you down and carry you off?"

"Yes," said Elsie firmly.

Tinker let himself fall gently back, and lay staring up into the blue vault. Elsie made the tea. Presently he said with a sigh, "I never *shall* understand girls—not really."

"Why? What's the matter? What do you mean?" she said quickly.

"Oh, nothing—nothing. Let me help you with the tea." And he sat up briskly, and taking the teapot shook it round and round to help the tea draw.

"What do you want to understand them for?" said Elsie, looking at him with great suspicion.

"Why, my father is always telling me that if you want to do anything in English diplomacy you have to know a good deal about women and how to deal with them, because they pull the political strings. You know the women really got Hoggenheimer his baronetcy."

"Yes; I heard Dorothy say so," said Elsie; then she added thoughtfully, "If that's what you want to understand them for, I don't mind."

"That's why," said Tinker.

Elsie poured out the tea, and presenting the plate of cake to Tinker bade him take some venison pasty.

Presently she said, "What do you think those two horrid men will do next?"

"There's no saying. But I don't think your poor uncle will hunt you any more in Beauleigh forest," said Tinker, with a seraphic smile.

He was right. All the evening, as they took whisky medicinally in large quantities, to preserve them from the evil effects of their ducking, Mr. Richard Brand and Mr. Oliver Brown talked with increasing violence and thickness of prosecuting Andrew Beg for assault. But in the morning their ingrained, sensitive shrinking from any closer contact with the English law than might be forced on them, was again well to the fore, and they let that matter drop. Neither, indeed, said a word about it. Both of them were worried by the necessity, which was growing clearer and clearer to them, of bringing an action against Lady Beauleigh for the recovery of Elsie.

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In the afternoon they took the train for London; and in the middle of the journey Mr. Oliver Brown broached the subject.

"Dick, my boy," he said suddenly with a bluff and Napoleonic heartiness, "there's no help for it. We've got to bring an action against these Beauleighs!"

"Action! Bring an action! What! go into the witness box?" cried Mr. Richard Brand, in a lively panic.

"Yes; there's nothing else for it. We may be years getting possession of the brat—years. The lor ain't partickerlerly quick, but it's quicker than that," said Mr. Oliver Brown firmly.

"But go into the witness box? There's no saying what those infernal lawyers won't ferret out!"

"No matter. You must stick it out. I know it's awkward—very awkward. But think of the stakes you're playing for. What's an hour or two's jawing from a lawyer to two or three thousand pound? I don't know what your parst 'as been——"

"Oh, it's not the truth I'm afraid of—not at all," said Mr. Richard Brand hastily. "It's lies and insinuations."

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Mr. Oliver Brown was afraid of the truth, very much afraid, but he said cheerfully:

"That's nothing at all—nothing at all. Men of the world won't think any the worse of you. There are things which look a bit orf, in all their lives; and they will hunderstand."

Mr. Richard Brand shook his head gloomily.

"Be a man, Dick! Be a man!" said his friend. "The boys won't think any the worse of you when you've a couple of thousand pound to spend."

"Ah, it's all very well to say 'Be a man'; but it's not you who's going into the witness box."

"I wish it was," said Mr. Oliver Brown earnestly. "I should feel a good deal safer. But what you've got to bear in mind is that the lor's on your side. You're only asking for your rights as a Briton."

"That's true," said his friend, cheering up.

"Well, that settles it. To-morrow we'll go to Hitchins and Crewe and set them to work."

At noon on the morrow, therefore, as soon as they had breakfasted, they betook themselves to the office of the lawyers. They laid the matter before Mr. Hitchins, and he at once called Mr. Crewe into consultation. By some fortu-

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nate chance Mr. Richard Brand had by him the documents needful to prove his kinship to Elsie; and they could set to work at once.

They set to work at once; but Mr. Richard Brand and his friend were not long learning how coy and elusive are the rights of a Briton when he woos them by legal process. Very naturally, but no less unfortunately, they began by bringing an action against Dorothy, since she was the holder of the largest purse, for the restoration of Elsie. Mr. Richard Brand was so handled in the witness box as to demonstrate to the world beyond all cavil that he was indeed a paltry rascal. Then Dorothy proved that she had nothing to do with the maintenance of Elsie, that the child had been a member of Sir Tancred's household before she married him. The action ended with some abruptness and Mr. Richard Brand had to pay the costs of both sides.

Next he took action against Sir Tancred. Having his unfortunate admissions in the first action to amplify his knowledge of Mr. Richard Brand's career, the counsel for the defense succeeded very easily in producing a vivid impression that he was the paltriest rogue outside Pentonville. After this Sir Tancred proved that

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Tinker was really the person who had taken upon himself the guardianship and support of Elsie, and that the form in which the action had been brought was incorrect. It also ended abruptly; and again Mr. Richard Brand was called on to pay the costs of both sides.

These expenses made a large hole in the hush-money he and Mr. Oliver Brown had drawn from the foolish young man from Oxford; but they were now on the right track; their lawyers were confident; and they brought another action in an amended form against Sir Tancred as the person responsible for the doings of Tinker, a minor.

After a pleasant summer, spent partly at Beauleigh and partly at the sea, Tinker and Elsie had come up to Town for the end of the Season. When Sir Tancred received notice from Mr. Morell that the action had been set down for trial, he took Tinker with him to discuss the matter.

After he had greeted them Mr. Morell said, "Well, this time, Beauleigh, they're on the right tack, and they'll win."

"It's monstrous," said Sir Tancred.

"Well, yes; I suppose it is; and of course the judge will not like handing the child over

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to these rascals. But he's on the Bench to administer the law; and he'll have to. You see the case has become a *cause célèbre*. That leader in *The Times* on the sanctity of the law, and on the pity of having to preserve that sanctity by sacrificing a child, but the necessity of doing so, doesn't leave him any other course."

"I suppose not," said Sir Tancred. "Well, and what are we to do now?"

Mr. Morell sat up very straight in his chair with a very shrewd gravity on his face. He gave them the impression that what he was going to say was very important.

"There is nothing to be done, or hardly anything. The Court will make an order that you deliver up the child; and if you fail to obey, you will be guilty of contempt of Court."

Sir Tancred looked at him thoughtfully, and said, "But if the Court hands her over to this rascal against its better judgment, I suppose it will take a lenient view of my failure to comply."

"Not a bit of it! Not a bit of it!" said the lawyer hastily. "It is nearly certain that the action will be tried by one of the touchiest old women on the Bench. He's more likely than not to send you to prison, if you disobey."

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"But hang it all! You don't advise me to give the child up to this rascal!"

"I do. As your legal adviser, I'm bound to. The only thing is that it might be impossible for you to obey the order. The child might have passed out of your hands." He spoke slowly, with great deliberation, weighing each word. "Suppose, for example, on hearing of the order of the Court, she ran away and hid herself so that you could not lay your hands on her, you would at once inform the Court, and you might even ask its aid to find her. I do not think it would be severe on you. But of course if you knew that she was going to run away, you would be bound to stop her."

During the latter part of this speech he had been looking at Tinker. Tinker had been listening to his statement of the case with a gloomy gravity; but at the end his face was wreathed in smiles—the smiles of a seraph.

"The nuisance of it is that if I had the time—another six weeks or two months—I am nearly sure that I could drive this rascal Brand out of the country. One of my men has got hold of one of his transactions, a matter of a check, which looks very fishy indeed. But it can't be dealt with in a hurry. The victim ap-

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pears to have been a fool to a point which he does not care to have made public, even for the pleasure of punishing Brand. It will take time to bring him to the scratch."

"I see," said Sir Tancred. "If I could postpone handing her over for that time, there would be no one to hand her over to."

"Exactly," said the lawyer.

"It's a great pity," said Sir Tancred.

They bade him good-by, and left him. On their way home they talked with admirable seriousness of the sad necessity of handing Elsie over to her detestable uncle.

During the days which elapsed before the action came on for hearing Tinker was probably the busiest boy in London. He spent hours of his time in the library of the house in Berkeley Square, studying maps, the time-tables of foreign railways, and guide-books, literature in which, thanks to his father's early training of him, he was well versed. But for all his careful study, he could not hit upon the exact hiding-place he wanted. He was still in this perplexity when reading one morning the fashionable intelligence in the *Morning Post*, as was his habit since it kept him informed of the doings of many of his friends and acquaintances, he read

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that Count Freising, a friend of his father, had arrived in London on a visit. The sight of the name suggested to him the very hiding-place he was seeking; he took his hat and cane; and walked briskly down to the Motor Club in Piccadilly.

He found, as he had expected, that Count Freising was staying there and at his breakfast. He sent in his card to him; and in twenty seconds the Count himself, big, beaming, and vociferous, came bustling out into the hall: "Ha! Ha! It is mine yong vrent, Tinkare! How are you? How do you do?" bellowed the famous motorist, grasping his hand. "It is goot—ver goot of you to me to come to velcome. Coom along, coom, and tell all what you are doing so long a while, and I will eat my breakfast as you tell."

He led Tinker by the hand into the dining-room, and set him in a chair at his table. Then he fell upon his breakfast again with a truly baronical appetite, talking vociferously the while about Tinker's doings, Sir Tancred's doings, and about their future movements. Tinker answered his questions, and countered with questions of his own about the doings of the Count, and the doings of common friends.

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Then the Count cried, "You must coom to my hunt again this year—you and your father. It is in October, chust as it was last two years hence when you coomed."

"Thank you: it would be very nice; and I should like it ever so much," said Tinker politely. "But you know since then my father and I have—have acquired fresh ties—acquired fresh ties." The phrase seemed to him so important and pleasing that he repeated it. "He has got married; and I have adopted a sister. So, you see, we're not as free as we were."

"No matter: no matter at all," said the Count firmly. "You can leave them in some town on the way, or at Dresden, or Munich, or Berlin, while you come to my shoot. It is only a week."

"We could always arrange it like that," said Tinker. "I expect my father would like to come as much as I should."

"Goot—goot—I will suggest him to so arrange it."

Tinker was silent a little while considering his request; then he said, "Are you doing anything with your shooting-box between now and October?"

"No; what is there to do with a shooting-

box? He is beclosed from October to October. I use him one week in the year; then I shut him oop, and he is empty."

"Well, I should be awfully obliged if you would rent it to me for the next two months."

"Rent it to you? But no! I will geef it to you till October with all the pleasure. But why do you want him? It is no good to live in the Böhmerwald now—there is no sport—no shooting—no anything. Why do you want him?"

"I want to hide there—at least I want to hide my adopted sister there," said Tinker; and he told the Count the story of Elsie, the machinations of her detestable uncle, and of the plight in which they would find themselves, if the final action went against them. The Count was all vociferous sympathy; he insisted on lending the shooting-box to them, and pledged himself to secrecy in the matter. Tinker thanked him heartily; for indeed he was relieved of much perplexity. He stayed and sat talking with the Count while he smoked a cigar, and received from him letters to his chief forester, to the forester in charge of the shooting-box, and to the chief of police of the district.

Then the Count strolled up to Berkeley

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Square with him to talk with Sir Tancred. Tinker left them together, betook himself to the library, and sat about working out the route to the Böhmerwald. It is not an easy journey, as journeys go, but Tinker's way of getting to it was of the tortuous kind, zigzagging about the German Empire till the final swoop down into the heart of the Mountains from the North. Many of the zigzags were already worked out with a view to a final swoop down into the Tyrol; and it was easy to extend them further into central Europe.

Owing to his peculiar study of geography under the tuition of his father, which had consisted in the acquisition of a knowledge of the chief railway and steamer routes in the world, Tinker could master a route in all its details of the startings and stoppages of trains or steamers with the ease with which an ordinary public-schoolboy masters the batting and bowling averages of any given cricketing season. He started with a thorough knowledge of the Continental expresses in their courses, the zigzags with which he embellished his route were merely a matter of the Continental Bradshaw. He had worked out his route in two days, and unlike ordinary mortals he had not compiled a bundle

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of written notes; he carried the ten days' railway travel in his head.

Then, his route settled, he set about other arrangements. He had made up his mind, for the further discomfiting of their pursuers, that disguise was needful. He went, therefore, down to Messrs. Clarkson and bought a long fair wig matching very fairly Elsie's hair in color. He also bought a theatrical make-up box, for the altering of their complexions should the need arise. Then he addressed himself to the matter of passports. He was not one of those easy-going travelers who go carelessly about the Continent without a passport; he had had occasion to observe how much trouble is sometimes saved by the possession of one. He procured a fresh one for himself, one for Elsie, and one for an imaginary blue-eyed, fair-haired child of thirteen, named Jane Carter, whom he proposed to impersonate in the fair wig when it was needful. Having made these preparations, he came one morning into Dorothy's boudoir, wearing an air of grave and serious importance that set her wondering. After some talk on indifferent matters, he said, "Will you lend me two hundred pounds? You know my father has my money in his hands; and it won't do for me to ask him

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for it, because I want it to take Elsie away with; and he mustn't know."

"I'll give you two hundred pounds," said Dorothy quickly.

"Thanks very much," said Tinker wriggling in some discomfort, and speaking with hesitation. "But—I—I'd much rather you lent it to me—I had really. You—you see it's for Elsie."

Dorothy smiled at him, and said, "Very well, monopolist, I'll lend it to you. I know your obstinate ideas about the obligations of the proprietor of a little girl."

The cloud vanished from Tinker's face; and it was wreathed with the most engaging smiles:

"Thank you very much," he said. "You do understand it isn't any sort of—of—grudgingness. Only I feel I ought to pay."

"I know; I know," said Dorothy smiling at him. "But really it's nothing but English obstinacy, you know, or perhaps it's the Beauleigh obstinacy."

"Do you think it is?" said Tinker gravely.

"I'm sure of it," said Dorothy, with conviction.

"Well, it might be," said Tinker thoughtfully. "But that's how I feel; and I think if

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one feels like that one oughtn't to go back on the feeling, don't you know?"

"I know," said Dorothy. "But do you know that sometimes when you talk to me like a thousand year old sage I feel inclined to catch hold of you and kiss you?"

"I—I should be charmed," said Tinker, withdrawing with involuntary precipitation from within her reach, and striving hard but unsuccessfully to wreath his face with gratified smiles.

"You would?" said Dorothy, smiling wickedly; "I'm afraid you're a humbug."

Tinker breathed a faint sigh of relief when he saw that she did not mean to carry out her threat, and said, "One has rather to be a humbug with women, don't you think?"

"Certainly not," said Dorothy.

"But you hurt their feelings so—often—if you aren't."

"I sometimes wonder where you get your morals from. They are really shocking every now and then. You certainly don't get them from your father," said Dorothy, with pained severity.

"Oh, he never cared much about women till he met you. He used to avoid them rather, if

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they'd let him; so he didn't have to humbug them," said Tinker artlessly.

"Thank you. I breathe again," said Dorothy, flushing faintly.

"But I like women—a good deal. So I have to be careful not to hurt their feelings. It wouldn't be nice, would it?" said Tinker, with unabated artlessness.

"One should always be honest," said Dorothy gravely.

Tinker looked at her thoughtfully, considering the matter; then he said, "Of course one has to be—in—in real things. But this is a sort of game—Society, I mean. It always makes me feel a bit as if I were playing a game, don't you know?"

Dorothy nodded.

"And politeness is part of it," said Tinker.

"I hadn't noticed that," said Dorothy dryly.

"I see lots of abominable manners."

"Oh, there are lots of sweeps. But they don't really count," said Tinker, with the cheerful optimism of his years.

"I don't know about that," said Dorothy.

"But I'll put on a hat, and we'll stroll round to the bank and get this money."

They went to the bank; she cashed her check;

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and gave him the two hundred pounds. Then they strolled up Bond Street, had ices and sweets at a shop, and strolled home. When Dorothy had taken off her hat, she found Tinker awaiting her in her boudoir. He drew an envelope from his pocket and offered it to her saying, "Here is my note of hand for two hundred pounds."

"Your what?" cried Dorothy.

"My note of hand. You give it to my father; and he'll pay you the money."

"But I don't want your note of hand!" cried Dorothy.

"But you have to have a note of hand when you lend money. My father always used to give people his note of hand. That's how I learned all about them. You get them at a bank or a post office," said Tinker, still holding it out with a pained air.

Dorothy took it reluctantly enough, and said, "I don't believe there's a house in the world where an unfortunate woman is so tyrannized over."

Tinker smiled at her and said cheerfully, "Oh, you always have your own way really. I've noticed it."

"Shucks!" said Dorothy.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### TINKER RETIRES TO THE CONTINENT

SINCE his forthcoming European journey was to be of the secret kind, Tinker did not turn the two hundred pounds into circular notes, but changed the bulk of it into German notes of small and moderate values. The rest he kept in the form of English sovereigns, since he had learned by experience that no matter on what terms England and any given European country may be, the inhabitants of that country will accept that coin singly, or in numbers, with effusion.

A few days before the action was set down for trial he and Elsie went down to the Hotel Metropole at Folkestone and awaited the decision of the Court with very little anxiety. They would, indeed, have been disappointed had it decided in their favor, for their hearts were set on an exciting flight to central Europe. At seven o'clock on the evening of the day of the trial the wire came. It ran:

The Court has decided that Elsie must be handed over to her uncle. Bring her back at once.

TANCRED BEAULEIGH.

It was a wire which would acquit anyone of contempt of Court; nothing could be clearer, or more peremptory. Tinker read it, and said to Elsie, "It's all right. The Court has decided you must be handed over to your uncle; and we can start at once."

"What fun!" said Elsie joyously.

"Yes; it ought to be. But I wish you weren't so delicate. There'll be a good deal of rough traveling," said Tinker a little anxiously.

"I'm not delicate. I'm never ill—except colds," Elsie protested.

Tinker shook his head doubtfully.

Everything was ready for their flight; they dined, caught a train to Dover, and went straight on board the Calais boat. Mr. Richard Brand, in company with Mr. Oliver Brown and the "boys," was still celebrating his glorious victory what time the steamer was carrying the prize of it to France.

At noon next day he was disturbed as he was lying in a pleasant drowsiness considering the glorious spending of the money he proposed to

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obtain for the sale of Elsie to Dorothy, by the arrival of a messenger boy bringing an express letter from his lawyer. He opened it to find another letter enclosed. He opened that and read:

DEAR SIR:

We are going abroad. It is no good your trying to find Elsie. I adopted her and I am going to keep her. So you can stop being silly and leave us alone.

Yours truly,

HILDEBRAND ANNE BEAULEIGH.

Mr. Richard Brand gasped, sprang from his bed, and rushed into the next room where reposed that Napoleon of the keyhole, Mr. Oliver Brown.

"We're done!" screamed Mr. Richard Brand. "All your magnificent plan has gone to pot! The order of the Court is useless! They've bolted to the Continent!"

Mr. Oliver Brown sat up in his frowzy bed, blinking, and said stupidly, "Who?—What?"

"That little Beauleigh boy! He's carried off Elsie to the Continent! Read this!"

Mr. Oliver Brown sprang out of bed, snatched the fatal missive, read it, and burst into execrations.

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It was a full five minutes before he was again the Napoleon of the keyhole. Then he folded his arms, and said, "We must lose no time. This was written at the Metropole Hotel, Folkestone, last night. Therefore they caught last night's boat to Boulogne."

"What a reasoner you are!" said Mr. Richard Brand, with fond admiration.

"We will get the necessary papers from the Court, and I will pursue them myself. I will go down to Folkestone and get on their track at once."

"What a mind! What a mind!" said Richard Brand, who was easily surprised by any manifestation of intelligence.

"It's nothing—nothing," said Mr. Oliver Brown proudly. "A little boy and girl—you don't suppose they'll give *me* any trouble. I shall have them back in London in three days. But we'd better go round to the Beauleighs and make a little trouble first. This is contempt of Court; and it'll have to be squared. It's another five hundred in our pockets."

"It isn't much you miss," said Mr. Brand.

"Not much," said Mr. Oliver Brown.

They dressed hurriedly, made a hasty breakfast, and took a cab to Berkeley Square. A quite

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unsympathetic butler opened the door to them, and in reply to their demand to see Sir Tancred and Lady Beauleigh, said, "Sir Tancred's just gone to Folkestone and Lady Beauleigh's out."

"We'll come in and wait for her," said Mr. Oliver Brown, with his best assured air of a man of the world.

"You won't," said the butler, who remembered very well their earlier visit.

"Now, my man, we don't want any nonsense," said Mr. Oliver Brown, raising his voice. "My friend Mr. Brand's niece has run away to the Continent; and you people knew of it. It's a serious matter—contempt of Court. Let me in at once."

The eager face of Marmaduke, the young footman, appeared over the shoulder of the butler; and he said, "Let them come in, Mr. Wilkinson; then I can throw them out."

With a faint grin, the butler opened the door wide and gave them an excellent view of the finely proportioned figure of Marmaduke.

Mr. Oliver Brown stepped backwards hastily and heavily on to the corns of his friend, who promptly addressed himself to the misadventure in horrible language.

From the bottom step he surveyed Marma-

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duke's fine proportions carefully; then he seized the arm of his quivering and anguished friend, and said, "Very well: come along, Richard, our redress lies elsewhere—in the hands of the law." And they went along the square pursued by the taunts of Marmaduke.

Sir Tancred had gone to Folkestone because among his letters at breakfast that morning had been one from Tinker. It ran:

MY DEAR FATHER:

We thought it better to hide on the Continent, for we don't mean to let Elsie's disgusting uncle get hold of her. Please tell Mr. Morell to hurry up and find out about his past and get him put in prison, then we can come back. With love to Dorothy,

Your affectionate son,

TINKER.

Sir Tancred read it out to Dorothy and they looked at one another and laughed.

"Well, he's cut the Gordian knot this time," said Sir Tancred.

"Yes; but it would have saved so much trouble if he'd let me pay Elsie's horrible uncle to leave her alone," said Dorothy.

"That's hardly Tinker's way," said Sir Tancred.

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"Well, what are you going to do?" said Dorothy.

"I shall do nothing at all with every appearance of violent energy. Morell will at once lay this letter before the judge—to exonerate me, don't you know? And I will run down to Folkestone and make inquiries. It will look well."

"I do hope the children will get on all right," said Dorothy anxiously.

"I have no fear of that. I've trained Tinker all his life to get on all right; he knows the Continent as most boys of his age know their playground; and if anything goes very wrong, he's too much sense not to wire. Besides, in a fortnight, at the outside, he'll be wanting money."

"He's got two hundred pounds," said Dorothy.

"The deuce he has! Then—then—we mayn't hear from him for two or three months! Bother!" said Sir Tancred.

"Oughtn't I to have let him have it?"

"Yes; oh, yes. Only I'm not used to being separated from him for so long. I shall miss him."

"Well, then, we must find him before that," said Dorothy.

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"Yes; I'll make real inquiries," said Sir Tancred.

Accordingly, after sending to Mr. Morell Tinker's letter and a copy of his own telegram of the evening before to Tinker, that they might be adduced as evidence of his freedom from blame for the children's flight, he caught an early train to Folkestone. He by no means took it for granted that Tinker had crossed to Boulogne. It was at least as likely that he had crossed England and taken the Harwich to Flushing steamer. However, he made careful inquiries about the children on the Boulogne boat, and found that three fair-haired, blue-eyed boys and five fair-haired, blue-eyed girls had crossed by it. He went back to his hotel and wrote to Dorothy to send him photographs of the two children. Four hours later Mr. Oliver Brown was confronted by the discovery of the passage of this number of fair-haired, blue-eyed children, and was expressing with quite unnecessary vehemence his wish that the younger generation of the English ran to a greater diversity of coloring.

Meanwhile Tinker and Elsie were traveling straight through to Cologne. At that town they slept a night and then they started to travel up

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and down and round about Germany. They went as far north as Lubeck and as far south as Munich; westward they went as far as Dresden. Sometimes a little boy and girl got into a train, and two little girls came out. Sometimes two little girls got into a train, and a boy and girl came out. The tale they told curious inquirers, of whom they met many, never varied; always they were traveling to their family at some town a hundred and fifty miles away. Many people showed every readiness to help them; and Tinker's appearance and manner disarmed even the proud incivility of German Jacks in office.

It would have been inconsistent alike with Tinker's character and luck to travel those hundreds of miles without adding to his responsibilities, and at Dresden he doubled them. He and Elsie were sitting in an evening express to Prague, watching the bustle about their train and an express from Breslau on the other side of the platform. Little by little it abated; the passengers had taken their places; only a few officials and half a dozen people seeing friends off were left about the trains; and the other express started. It had moved but a few paces, when the door of a compartment in it, opposite

the two children opened; a woman sprang lightly to the platform, crossed it quickly, and came into their carriage; in less than a minute their train had started too; and Tinker heard their fellow-traveler's gasp of relief.

His curiosity was awakened, and he looked at her. She stared out of the window at the racing lights of the town, and gave him the opportunity of examining her closely. She was, for all her extreme paleness, such a pretty creature that, taking her beauty with her evasion from the Breslau express, he was at first inclined to suppose that she must be a member of one of the international gangs of criminals, of whose appearance he had gained some knowledge at such blithe Continental resorts as Monte Carlo, Ostend, and Hamburg. But when they had run through the town into the dark country, and she had turned her face from the window, he saw that her large brown eyes were the candid, innocent eyes of a young girl and that she lacked the set lips of those who live in a perpetual defiance of the law. His interest in her grew. She sat staring before her with somber, unseeing eyes, wearing something of the air of one playing a tragic part.

A yawn from Elsie recalled him to a sense of

his duties; and he helped her arrange herself comfortably on the seat. She soon fell asleep; and he again addressed himself to the consideration of their fellow-traveler. She sat motionless, save that now and again her lips twitched, or her hands clasped and unclasped nervously. Her somber eyes maintained their unwavering stare into vacancy. Little by little he came to understand that she was the prey of terror.

Her wretchedness troubled him more and more, and he cast about in vain for some method of making her let him try to help her. At last, at the end of half an hour, two great tears welling slowly out of her eyes rolled down her cheeks; and he could stand it no longer:

"What's the matter?" he said bluntly, in French.

The girl started with a gasp, and stared at him with wild eyes. Then she drew a handkerchief from her pocket and dried her wet cheeks.

"You'd better tell me. Perhaps I could help you," said Tinker gently.

She looked at him wistfully, threw out her hands in a gesture of hopelessness, and cried in a charming but despairing voice, "How could a little boy?"

"Oh, really——" said Tinker, a little morti-

fied; "if—if—a mouse could help a lion, don't you know?"

She shook her head; but she looked at him earnestly, as if considering the possibility.

"You may as well give me the chance, I may be able to do something," said Tinker cheerfully. "Are you running away from the police?"

The girl shivered; then, throwing out her hands again in the same gesture of hopelessness, in a plain desire to lighten her burden by sharing it with someone—anyone—she cried:

"Yes; I am! And I had escaped! I was over the frontier—the most difficult part of it. Then I saw Red Ivan on the Dresden platform—and he saw me."

"Who is Red Ivan?" said Tinker.

"A police agent—the worst police agent in Warsaw."

"Well, you shook him off beautifully. I never saw anything neater."

"But only for the time. When I get to Prague, I've no ticket, or I might slip away unnoticed and hide. Why, very likely I shall be recognized at once. The Russian police spies watch every big station in Europe; and the

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Austrian and German police let them do just as they like. If Red Ivan had seen me three minutes earlier, he would have arrested me at Dresden."

"Anyhow, you're going as far and as fast from one another as you can. He will be sick when he finds you're not in the train," said Tinker, with a happy smile.

"But he will telegraph—to Prague first probably. He'll come himself, too. He'll leave nothing undone to catch me—nothing!" cried the girl.

"They must be keen on getting you. Have you thrown a bomb at someone?" said Tinker, his face lighting up into a cheerful, excited animation.

The girl shook her head; and said, "No; I have not thrown bombs myself. And there are other reasons besides political. Oh, the police will be well rewarded for bringing me back!" And she shivered.

Tinker's face fell a little at hearing that she had thrown no bombs; he would have found her of the greatest possible interest had she performed that feat. He leaned back against the cushions in silence, applying all his precocious genius for intrigue to the matter. As

he thought it out, the girl fell back into her unhappy musing.

Presently, he said, "Well, I think I can see how to work it. The first thing to do is to disguise you."

"Disguise me! But how? The danger is at the Prague station! As soon as we get there!" cried the girl.

"We happen to have a wig and some grease-paints," said Tinker, smiling. "It's awful lucky. Elsie can fix on the wig, I should think; and I'll take the color out of your dark eye-brows and put some color on your cheeks with the grease-paints. I think we can work the passport too, the one for Jane Carter. It's only altering 13 into 23—that's easy enough. And you can be Elsie's governess—an English governess. Elsie—Elsie!"

Elsie awoke and sat up; and while he took down and unstrapped one of the little dress-baskets which held their light belongings, he told her quickly of the girl's plight and what they must do.

He took the fair wig from its wrappings; the girl, astonished, but thrilling with a new hope, took off her hat, shook down her mass of soft brown hair, and began to plait it into flat nar-

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row plaits. Her fingers were deft and quick; Elsie tied the end of each plait as it was finished with cotton to keep it secure; and presently it was all bound up as close to her head as it could go. But even so, there was a mass of it; and the wig was difficult to arrange. But Elsie worked at it patiently, plaiting the long fair hair into broad plaits; and at last the brown hair was all hidden. That done, Tinker toned down the black eyebrows to a very light brown, and colored the pale cheeks. Then the girl put on her hat, the hatpins held the structure more firmly in its place, and it was made yet more stable by tying round it the thick veil which Elsie sometimes wore in places where she did not wish to be seen, to hide her face.

The girl looked at herself in the mirror and cried, "Ah, but it is wonderful!"

"I think it'll do," said Tinker, in a tone of content. "And now you're Miss Carter—Miss Jane Carter—an English woman and Elsie's governess."

"My name is Sonia Treskiatski," said the girl.

"That's a pretty name," said Tinker quickly.

"But we can't call you by it. We'd better call you Miss Carter. My name is Hildebrand Anne Beauligh, but I'm generally called Tinker; and

Elsie's name is Elsie Brand. She's my adopted sister."

They sat down; and Sonia said, "I don't know how to thank you enough. If I get through Prague station you will have saved me. I can't thank you enough."

"There's nothing to thank us for yet; and anyhow we're awfully pleased to help you, don't you know?" said Tinker. "What are you going to do when you get out of the station?"

"I don't know. I wish it weren't Prague. I have no friends there. I must get to Koniggratz," said Sonia, in a fresh uneasiness.

"Why, that's on the way back to Russia! You don't want to go that way! You must come with us and lie hid in the Böhmerwald for a month or two till they've forgotten you. And then—oh, then you might work down by Munich to Genoa and take a steamer to England. That would be a much safer route."

"With you? With you? But—but—if I were caught, I should get you into trouble! Oh, terrible trouble! They would send you to prison!"

"Not they! We're English!" said Tinker scornfully. "Besides, we'll chance it, anyhow, won't we, Elsie?"—Elsie nodded—"It's no

good beginning a thing and stopping in the middle, don't you know?"

"Oh, you are good!" cried Sonia.

"Oh, but we like it; it's an adventure: don't we, Elsie?" said Tinker.

"We—we should feel so horrid and uncomfortable if we didn't know you were quite safe," said Elsie.

"Rather," said Tinker. "So that's settled. And I tell you what: you'd better not know any French or German at all. English governesses don't really, you know. I'll do all the talking to the railway people."

Sonia agreed, and thanked them again. Then in answer to a question from Tinker she told them of her escape from Warsaw and her passage across the frontier. That led to her telling them of the revolution in Warsaw, of the plots and counterplots, of the continuous war between the revolutionaries and the police, of massacre following assassination and assassination following massacre. They listened to her with all their ears, and she was still telling the story when they ran into Prague.

Tinker at once took the direction of affairs, and explained to the ticket-collector at the barrier that he had lost one of the tickets. The

man made no trouble about it, and let him pay. Then Tinker led them out of the station, took a cab, and drove to the hotel he had chosen for their stay. He had been to it with his father some three years before. The proprietor and the head-waiter knew him at once; his ingenious methods of provoking such of his fellow-creatures as seemed likely to repay a little careful attention, to outbursts of apoplectic fury, had impressed the memory of him forever on their minds. They welcomed him with smiles of pleasant expectation. He dashed their joy by telling them that he was only staying the night, that he must catch the six o'clock train to Pilsen in the morning. They made haste to conduct him to the suite of rooms, a sitting-room and two bedrooms, he selected, and assured him that supper should be brought up in five minutes.

When he had shut the door of the sitting-room, he said with a happy sigh of repletion, "This is a real adventure. We're getting on."

"But I thought we were going to stay here three or four days," said Elsie.

"We were. But now we've got to go on putting all the miles we can between Miss Carter and this Red Ivan."

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He was unfastening one of the dress-baskets as he spoke, and took out of it the passports. He unfolded the one made out for Jane Carter, and laid it on the writing-table. Then his face fell, and he looked a little uneasily round the room.

"I'm not very good with a pen," he said, "I might smudge it, and that wouldn't do at all. Will you have a shot at it, Miss Carter?"

"Very well," said Sonia, and taking the pen she changed the 1 of the 13 into a 2.

"That's all right," said Tinker, in great content. "You've got a passport now that will do all right. Of course your eyes aren't blue. But no official will ever notice that; he'll see your fair hair and that'll be enough for him. They never do look at English passports really properly."

The ink was hardly dry when supper came. Sonia went into the bedroom she was sharing with Elsie while the waiter laid the table. Then they supped; and directly afterwards went to bed. Elsie was tired, and Sonia was worn out by the anxieties of her day. They were up sometimes; and first of all Sonia's disguises were renewed; then they breakfasted, and reached

the station five minutes before the starting of the Pilsen express.

"I don't want to have any waiting about to do," said Tinker. "It's while you're waiting about that people notice you."

When the train started, he heaved a little sigh of relief, and said, "We're getting on. Red Ivan will have to hurry up, if he's going to get in touch with you again."

"Oh, but you do understand escaping," said Sonia.

"I ought to," said Tinker, with his most seraphic smile. "Elsie and I have been doing nothing else for the last ten days."

"You!" cried Sonia; "you escaping!"

"Rather," said Tinker; and he told her of their flight from the order of the Court.

"But—but—I thought that England was a free country," said Sonia, when he had ended his tale.

"Oh, yes; it is," said Tinker, with patriotic fervor. "But this was rather different, don't you know?"

Presently the two girls began to yawn, and Tinker made them go to sleep and make up for the shortness of their night's rest. They reached Pilsen in time for *déjeuner*, and an hour after it

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they caught a slow train for the Bavarian frontier. It was slow; it moved in the most leisurely way, and lost no chance of stopping to rest. It was evening before they crossed the frontier. Their passports suffered, as Tinker had expected, but a cursory examination. The officer never perceived that Sonia's eyes, obscured by her veil, were brown and not blue. At Furth they left the train and went to an hotel for the night, and very soon after supper they went to bed.

The long night's rest restored Elsie, who was feeling the many tiresome journeys of the last ten days; and Sonia had lost much of her anxious air. She still wore her disguise. After breakfast Tinker spread out a map on the table, and said, "We must hold a council of war now. You see we're here at Furth—about twenty-five miles from Count Freising's shooting-box, which is eight miles to the right of Kotzing, just where that little red cross is."

Elsie and Sonia looked at the map very wisely and said that they saw.

"Well, it's very tiresome for Sonia to go on wearing that wig: and it won't do for her to change from fair to dark in a town, or even in a railway train. The guard might spot it.

So I think we'd better walk from here to Neukirchen—it's only about seven miles and down hill—and she can take the wig off and clean off the grease-paint on the way. Then at Neukirchen we can get a carriage, or cart, and drive to Kotzing. At Kotzing we'll get another cart to drive us to the shooting-box. The thing is, can you two walk to Neukirchen?"

"Oh, I should like to walk. I am so tired of trains," said Elsie.

"I should like to walk too. I want to be out in the free air. I've been shut up hiding for so long," said Sonia.

At half-past ten, therefore, they set out; and once at the foot of the hills the road ran most of the way beside a little river. At the end of an hour's walk Sonia took off the fair wig with a great sigh of relief, and cleaned the grease-paint from her eyebrows and cheeks. She kept the veil on her hat, however, ready to draw down over her face, should anyone of doubtful appearance meet them.

Relieved of her disguise, her face brightened and her step quickened: "A day or two of freedom like this and I should forget that I had been so afraid!" she cried.

They reached Neukirchen at a few minutes

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past one, with very fine appetites. The landlord of the inn they lunched at provided them with a cart to carry them to Kotzing. They reached that village at half-past three, and, after paying their driver, betook themselves to the serious business of buying food and other things needful for their stay in the forest. Only the simplest food could be bought; and what was worse only the simplest clothes; and Sonia had to replenish her wardrobe. Elsie was a little surprised at the content with which she bought the common stuffs and garments; it produced an abiding belief in her childish mind that the ladies of Warsaw lived perpetually the simple life.

Their purchases made, Tinker had no trouble in hiring a cart to take them to the shooting-box—Count Freising's name made everyone eager to serve them. The last three miles of their journey along a mountainous forest road was very slow. It was not so much that they had to get out of the cart and walk as that they had to get out and push. But soon after seven, having picked up Solms, the forester, at his hut a mile down the road, they reached the end of their journeyings, the long, wooden, thatched shooting-box in the middle of a glade on a

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mountain spur, commanding a view from its front windows of a green sea of tree tops stretching many leagues.

They made haste to get a fire lighted in the long sitting-room to air bedding; they opened the windows; they hung the hams they had bought in the larder, and set out the rest of their provisions on its shelves. By half-past eight their supper was cooked; and they were so sleepy in the strong mountain air that they could scarcely eat it. After supper they lost no time getting to bed, and slept a dreamless sleep.

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## CHAPTER SIX

### THE ISLAND AND THE PIRATE

THEY were up betimes. Already Sonia's face had lost its haggard air of strain. They entered into their new kingdom with great cheerfulness; and she was nearly as light-hearted, nearly as much a pleased child as either Tinker or Elsie.

He lighted the fire and brought water from the spring behind the hunting-lodge. Sonia and Elsie made the coffee and fried the ham, under his careful supervision. To Sonia it was a new experience; she had never done any cooking in her life; and she was surprised at the knowledge and skill of the children. The bread was somewhat coarse and the sugar was coarser; but they brought to the meal appetities superior to any fastidiousness, and they enjoyed it thoroughly.

After breakfast they had a great dusting of furniture, cleaning of windows, and beating of rugs. Tinker and Elsie were quite enthusiastic over the work, since they had hit upon the happy

idea that it was a spring cleaning of the Swiss Family Robinson.

This happy idea suggested to Tinker the proper arrangement of this new life on which they had entered; and when they had come to an end of their work, he opened the question by saying, "Now what are we going to do about this forest? You see we could be outlaws, or we could be shipwrecked on a desert island. We are quite as much out of the world as if we were."

"We are in a forest, and that's where outlaws always are," said Elsie.

"Yes; but that's just it," said Tinker. "I am an outlaw, at least I should think I was, because I didn't take any notice of the order of the Court to give you up to your beastly uncle; and it's no good pretending to be what you are, is it?"

"No, of course, it isn't," said Elsie, with ready agreement, while Sonia looked somewhat puzzled.

"And this forest will make a splendid desert island. We're really just as far, or nearly as far from anybody as if we were on one."

"There's the foresters," said Elsie doubtfully.

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"I thought they'd do very well for savages," said Tinker. "I think we'd better make it a desert island."

"All right," said Elsie cheerfully; and a desert island it was made.

Tinker explained the proposed course of action at some length to the puzzled Sonia. When she understood it, she said cheerfully, "Oh, yes; it will be very amusing. It is a game."

Tinker looked at her with something of a pained air, and said, "Oh, no: it isn't. At least it is really; but you have to pretend it isn't, or you won't get any fun out of it."

"I see," said Sonia. "I shall pretend so hard that I shall soon believe it is a desert island."

"That's the way," said Tinker, with warm approval.

Accordingly they set about living the shipwrecked life. They began by cutting down a thin sapling, lopping off its branches, and erecting it, with a red handkerchief floating from its top, in front of the lodge. Then they heaped up a great beacon of dry pine branches beside it, ready to kindle when the exigencies of the situation demanded that they should see a sail on the horizon. They went about on perpetual guard against being surprised by hostile sav-

ages; and the difficulty of the daily coming of Solms, the forester, with their goat's milk was got over by appointing him to the post of chief of a friendly tribe.

Then they bought a goat and a kid from him, and had no difficulty in regarding them as a full-sized flock. They planted wheat and raisins, with a fine carelessness of the seasons, to provide them with corn and wine for many years. They cured, a horrid process, the skins of the rabbits which Tinker shot, to serve them as clothes when their own should have fallen to pieces. They were, indeed, somewhat annoyed by the fact that the cocoanut palm has resolutely refused to grow in central Europe, not because they had any great hankering for its fruit, but because cocoanuts are an inevitable accompaniment of the shipwrecked situation, and they could find no tree to gratify Tinker's passion for completeness with a plausible substitute.

For the most part, too, the shipwrecked life continued through the evening; they would discuss seriously the probability of their island being discovered by the warship which the Court of Chancery would assuredly send out to search for them. They elaborated the story of their shipwreck. Every time Tinker talked of it, he

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added some fresh detail which rounded it off: indeed, he made it so real at times to Elsie that she would talk with unaffected regret of their drowned shipmates, especially of the captain, one Ballard, an heroic figment, who had, firmly and in the most gallant fashion, gone down with his imaginary ship.

Very soon Sonia learned to accompany and sustain them in these flights of the imagination with an excellent seriousness. As soon as the strain of her flight had worn off, she abandoned herself, with an admirable wisdom, to the charm of this careless, untrammelled life, undisfigured by the Cossacks and police agents of Polish society. She realized thoroughly that she was for the time being out of the revolutionary struggle, and set herself to take advantage of the happy lull to restore her energies. It was the easier for her that she was an orphan, and had no one dear to her among the revolutionists. Her few relations, indeed, belonged to the Russian ruling classes.

Tinker and Elsie were a perpetual delight to her, and no little of a puzzle. Their delightful manners, their careful consideration of her, their extreme practicalness, combined with their intense absorption in the shipwrecked situation,

charmed her. She wondered how they had learned to adapt themselves with such effect to the uncommon circumstances of their present life and make the best of them. She was puzzled and impressed, too, by the stores of the wisdom of the world which Tinker had at his disposal, and upon which he drew on occasion for her benefit. Sometimes he found that her girlish outlook on life—she had come straight from her French convent to Warsaw, very little changed by the revolutionary experiences into which she had with ingenuous enthusiasm plunged—needed enlarging. Sometimes he disappointed her by the coldness of his attitude to the heroic. He showed a very quick eye for the theatrical in heroism, and a somewhat discomfiting tendency to judge it by its achievements.

One night after she had told a stirring story of an abortive riot, he said, "But what's the good of *dying* on a barricade? I thought you built them to kill tyrants from. These people didn't kill a single Cossack."

Such a comment had something of the effect of a cold douche on her emotional Slav temperament; but she could not but admit its pertinence.

Their life was very pleasant. The day began

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with a firm milking of their remarkably cross-grained goat, who demanded the careful, even violent attention of all three of them to make that rustic operation a success. Then followed the cooking of the breakfast, in which Sonia under the spur of a healthy appetite soon began to take a really helpful part. After they had breakfasted and washed up the breakfast things they went wandering in the forest. It was full of beautiful things; glades, dells, ancient trees, springs, and flowers. It was full, too, of wild creatures whose doings afforded them a perpetual and varied entertainment. It was no season for game, but the forest swarmed with innumerable rabbits which Tinker shot with one of the Count's small rifles when they needed them; Solms now and again shot a fawn, and sold parts of it to them. The forest streams were full of trout; there were a dozen fishing-rods and four books of flies in the hunting-lodge; and Tinker, who had fished in several lands, was a skillful fisherman. He not only caught as many trout as they could eat, but also he set about teaching the art to Sonia and Elsie with a gentle and invincible patience.

On one of these excursions they made an acquaintance whose presence on their desert island

seemed, at first, something of a dislocation of the shipwrecked situation. One morning they came out from among the trees on to the banks of their favorite pool to find a very large young man engaged in fishing it. They came on him far too suddenly for Tinker to accord to him the treatment proper to a hostile savage, and withdraw his charges with silent caution from his neighborhood. For the young man turned quickly and faced them with a face on which sudden curiosity gave place to a growing astonishment and admiration. Then he raised his hat with a guilty blush and said in execrable German, "Good morning, I hope I'm not trespassing on your fishing-ground."

Tinker hesitated, inclined to save the shipwrecked situation by driving this large stranger from their sphere of influence in the forest. But he was attracted by the young man's face, which was of that old Roman type, chiefly found nowadays in Western America, and by his frank gray eyes in which lurked a spice of whimsicality. It flashed upon him that if the stranger would only conform decently to the requirements of the shipwrecked situation, he might prove an agreeable addition to their circle. Therefore, he said graciously, in English, "I don't know

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anything about the German game-laws. I've—  
I've always been on the right side of them—  
invited to shoots, don't you know?"

The young man nodded and said quickly, with a pleasant smile, "Then you're not the proprietor; and I don't think you're the kind to give me away. My name is Gabriel Arnott, I'm an American."

"Arnott—Arnott?" said Tinker, knitting his brow in an effort of memory. "Beef?"

"You've guessed it at once," said the young man, with a faint grin. "That's me—at least it's my father. Arnott's Brilliant Brand of World-wide Beef."

"My name is Beauleigh—Hildebrand Anne Beauleigh. Let me introduce you to Miss Brand, my adopted sister, and Miss—Miss Carter, her governess."

The young man bowed, and let his admiring eyes dwell for a little while on Sonia's charming face, while she looked at his tanned features and athletic figure with a fleeting, shy approval. Then he said with plain reluctance, "Well, I'd better be clearing out of your fishing-ground."

"There's no need," said Tinker graciously, "There's plenty of room. I'm not going to fish. I'm teaching my sister and Miss Carter."

Gabriel Arnott hesitated and blushed faintly again; then he said, "Perhaps—could I—could I be of any help? I've taught men to fish myself."

"Rather," said Tinker eagerly. "I should get on much quicker teaching one at a time. If you'll teach Miss Carter, I'll teach Elsie."

Gabriel Arnott felt that the gods were being good indeed to him; he took Sonia's rod and addressed himself to the task of putting it together with the liveliest alacrity. The two lessons were not given so far apart but that they could talk; and he told them how he came to be in the Böhmerwald. He had come from America more than a year before to make the grand tour of Europe. He had grown tired of cities, purchased a camping outfit in Munich, and betaken himself to the Böhmerwald to enjoy a free and unconstricted life for a while. He talked about the countries he had seen and how they had affected him; and he gathered from Tinker's comments on his impressions that that young Ulysses enjoyed an even wider acquaintance with them than himself.

The result of his cheerful expansiveness was that at the end of an hour they had become almost intimate friends; and when Tinker asked

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if he were going to stay long in the Böhmerwald he said with an air of somewhat rueful whimsicality, "Well, the old man—my father, I mean—has been worrying me to return and go into the business. But I don't seem to find myself such a glutton at cow-yards as I was—somehow."

"Your father won't like that, I expect," said Tinker.

"Well, there is a pile of dollars—about as big as that Monument of yours in London City. I can't suspect my father of being so selfish as to have piled them all up for himself, can I?"

"It would be very wrong," said Sonia seriously.

"Well, if he piled some of them up for me, I feel I should like to try to use them to do something bigger than can beef. Though of course canned beef is a very useful and important thing. Why, all American civilization rests on a basis of canned beef and canned hog's meat."

He uttered the aphorism with a rapt air.

"What does it taste like?" said Tinker, with some irrelevance.

"I don't really know," said Gabriel Arnott.

"But the advertisements say it's very nice, and

it's surely world-wide. Well, as I was saying, if some of those dollars are for me, they're no good to me unless I can use them the way I want to; and if I've got to make my own pile, well, I want to make it some other way. That's what I really come into the Böhmerwald to worry out."

"There are better things for a brave man to do," said Sonia.

"And there are heaps of things that are much better fun doing," said Tinker.

"I don't know—there's no flies on canning beef. And the worst of it is you can't make a big pile at those other things," said Gabriel.

"What do you want to make a big pile for? Most of the people I know who've made big piles are such sweeps," said Tinker severely.

"But one must make a big pile. It's—it's your first duty to make a big pile. At least that's our notion in the States."

"Then it's your first duty to grow into a sweep," said Tinker, with the smile of a kindly seraph.

"But you—don't you mean to make a big pile?" said Gabriel Arnott quickly, with something of a nettled air.

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"Me? I'm going into the Diplomatic Service. How could I?" said Tinker, surprised. "Of course my step-grandmother might leave me a lot of her money. But then I disowned her: so I shouldn't think she will. And my step-grandfather, Septimus Rainer, he wants me to go to the States, into business. But I'd rather not—it might grow hard to be a gentleman."

"Septimus Rainer—he's your step-grandfather, is he? Then you're a son of Sir Tancred Beauleigh. I used to know your step-mother, out in the States, when she was still Dorothy Rainer," said Gabriel Arnott.

"Isn't she a dear?" said Tinker.

"She's a world-beater," said Gabriel Arnott, with fervor. "And Septimus Rainer—you wouldn't call him a sweep!"

"Oh, no: he's quite all right," said Tinker. "But then he made his pile honestly, don't you know?"

This discussion of the Ideal suffered a sudden interruption: Sonia hooked a fish; and both of them were quite busy showing her how to play it. At last it was landed with great triumph; and the incident turned their talk to the fishing exploits of Gabriel Arnott in different parts of the States. At noon Elsie's and Sonia's

rods were put up, and they made ready to start for home. Before they left him, Tinker invited Gabriel Arnott to dine with them that night, an invitation he accepted with effusion.

On the way home Tinker was silent, plainly pondering some weighty matter. At last a seraphic smile wreathed his lips, he breathed a sigh of relief, and said with profound conviction, "He is a marooned pirate."

"Is he?" said Elsie.

"That's what he is," said Tinker, in a tone of absolute finality.

"What is it—a marooned pirate?" said Sonia.

"A pirate landed by the other pirates on a desert island, because they want to get rid of him," said Tinker.

"But a pirate—what is that?" said Sonia.

"Pirates are sea-robbers who burn ships and murder their crews. They make them walk the plank."

"But it is impossible! He cannot be anything so detestable!" said Sonia, with lively indignation.

"I'm afraid he is," said Tinker firmly.

"You see, if you find anyone on a desert island, you have to account for them."

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"Oh, I see," said Sonia, with some relief.  
"It is the idea fixed."

"Well, I like things to fit in," said Tinker gravely.

As for Gabriel Arnott, he was enchanted with his new acquaintance, or, to be exact, he was pleased with them all and enchanted with one. He found Sonia beyond measure attractive—so attractive indeed that he asked himself, blushing, whether he could possibly have been smitten with love at first sight.

But he was hardly less puzzled than enchanted. Her style of beauty was as far as could be from the Anglo-Saxon; the accent, pretty as it was, with which she spoke English, was out of keeping alike with her name and her character of English governess. The very presence of the trio in the wild Böhmerwald seemed to need accounting for. But he was far too pleased that his period of self-communion should be brightened by such companionship, to let these mysteries greatly trouble him.

He found the hours to dinner time pass very slowly; and when it came to dressing he was annoyed, even distressed, by the shortcomings of his wardrobe. He was almost angry with himself for not having added evening dress to

his camping outfit. In his impatience—an impatience which made his half-developed theory that he had fallen in love at first sight, seem by no means lacking in foundation—to set eyes on Sonia once more, he arrived at the shooting-lodge twenty minutes before the dinner hour.

His early coming was by no means ill-timed: he found Tinker, in an apron and paper cap, playing the part of the great French chef and directing the culinary efforts of an enormous staff. Gabriel was at once enrolled in it, and proved an excellent recruit, since he had drawn from his experience, camping out during many holidays, no little skill in dealing with woodland food.

In the middle of dinner Tinker informed him, with all delicacy, that he had been cast for the part of marooned pirate. He accepted the *rôle* cheerfully and at once proceeded to regale them on choice stories of his exploits in the China Seas, among the South Sea islands, and on the Spanish Main. For a pirate, he seemed to have seen a good deal of the world. They passed a very pleasant evening, and Gabriel carried away with him a yet clearer image of Sonia's starry eyes. He sat a while over his campfire on his return, dreaming of them.

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The next day they visited his camp; and Sonia, who had never seen anything of the kind before, admired it with the simple delight of a child confronted with new toys. The intimacy thus begun, grew with great quickness. Very soon, Sonia in her turn was in a case to dream of a pair of steadfast gray eyes, had it been a girl's part to allow herself such an indulgence. She was, indeed, somewhat frightened of Gabriel. Her convent teaching had found no place in the scheme of things for the love of young men and maidens; these matters were the province of arranging parents. On the other hand her companionship with the revolutionists had been too short to allow her to acquire their freedom of view in matters of sentiment. She was haunted continually by the feeling that her companionship with Gabriel, delightful as it was, was wrong. None the less it went as far as the secure peacefulness in which she now dwelt, to soothe her strained nerves; a faint color began to warm her clear, pale cheeks, and her beautiful eyes grew starrier. In truth she would have found the Böhmerwald a flawless Eden had she but had more and finer clothes; for the sense that her companionship with Gabriel was not fitting by no means prevented the desire to set

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forth her beauty to the best advantage before his admiring eyes. But there were no milliners, even had it been safe for her to go to one, for many miles; materials were as hard to come by; and had she been able to procure them, her convent upbringing had gifted her with little skill in plain sewing.

Little by little, forsaking his camp during the day, though he always slept at it, Gabriel became inseparable from them. He shared their work and their play, contributing to their larder and raising the standard of their cooking. Also his lively invention enabled him to suggest some new and interesting points in the shipwrecked situation.

He had many discussions with Tinker on worldly matters, and acquired much fresh and valuable knowledge of the polite and the cosmopolitan worlds from that accomplished but seraphic sage. Naturally, however, he was most of the time at Sonia's side, talking to her of the thousand subjects the forest presented in an increasing variety, or telling her of his life and people in the States. She would have talked with equal freedom about herself; but since reticence was her whim, he bore with it. The mystery of her accent and un-English beauty

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still puzzled him; but he gave it very little thought.

Their budding passion did not long escape Tinker's experienced eye; and one afternoon as they were strolling down, Gabriel and Sonia leading, to the stream to fish, he said to Elsie, "Those two are falling in love with one another."

"Do you think they are?" said Elsie, awakening at once to the liveliest interest.

"I'm sure of it," said Tinker firmly; and with an air of profound wisdom, he added, "I don't see what else they could do. They're just the right age and good-looking; and this forest—I mean this island—is a rather good place for that sort of thing."

"You're—you're not going to stop it?" said Elsie doubtfully.

"Rather not. Why should I?" said Tinker, with some surprise.

"You always say you don't approve of being in love," said Elsie.

"Well, it is silly. But if there's any real point in it, I don't mind," said Tinker, with splendid broad-mindedness. "And this time it will be an awfully good thing, don't you know? I shan't have to worry about Sonia—not really."

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Gabriel will help me get her away; and then he'll marry her and take her right off my hands."

"I'm so glad you're not going to stop them: they'll be so nice to watch," said Elsie.

Tinker looked at her, and said with a sigh of resignation, "It's very funny how that sort of thing amuses girls."

"It's natural that it does," said Elsie.

"But why does it?" said Tinker, with the air of a patient inquirer into the ultimate truth of things.

Elsie considered the question for a full minute; then she said, "I don't know why—but it does."

The first result of Tinker's discovery was a practical breaking up of the little circle: Sonia and Gabriel were for the most part isolated. They were far from resenting this isolation; it is to be doubted that they ever perceived it. In fact it was exceedingly grateful to them. They spent four or five hours of every day alone together. Then Tinker was exercised in mind about keeping Gabriel, since his interest in Sonia had grown so extravagant, any longer ignorant of her real condition.

One afternoon they were sitting together on a bench in front of the shooting-lodge, and he

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said to her, "I say, have you told Gabriel that you're not really an English governess?"

Sonia blushed faintly and said, "No; I have not told him. You said it must be a secret that I was Sonia Tresiatki."

"Yes; but I'm sure he's quite safe, and you may as well tell him. I think he ought to be told, because we've made such a friend of him."

Sonia nodded, but she looked for a while with considerable steadfastness at a commonplace tuft of grass; then, blushing again, she added, "Couldn't—couldn't you tell him?"

"Oh, yes; I'll tell him," said Tinker readily.

They were silent a while, then Sonia said, "Do you think—do you think he will not like it? Is it that he will be angry?"

"No: why should he? A Russian revolutionist is—is a more exciting thing than an English governess. And after all it wouldn't matter to him what you were—not a bit."

"How not matter?" said Sonia quickly.

"In this sort of thing it never seems to," said Tinker, rising.

Sonia knitted her brow and said, "I do not understand—what sort of thing."

"Oh, this sort of thing," said Tinker vaguely, escaping into the hunting-lodge.

Later in the afternoon he found himself alone with Gabriel, and said, "Now that we know you so much better, and—and—you're all right, there's a secret I am going to tell you. Sonia isn't a governess and she isn't English."

"I was pretty sure she wasn't English," said Gabriel.

"Yes; it is pretty plain. She's a Russian and a Revolutionist and she's in hiding from the Warsaw police," said Tinker.

"This is talking!" said Gabriel.

"She's quite a harmless revolutionist. She hasn't assassinated anyone; she hasn't even thrown a bomb," said Tinker.

"I guess not! She's not that kind!" cried Gabriel, with conviction.

"I shouldn't like to say that, because women are so surprising. Now even Elsie—but Sonia's only helped to plot," said Tinker.

"How does she happen to be with you? How did she get here?" said Gabriel.

"We found her in a railway train at Dresden. She'd just been recognized by a Warsaw detective. So we disguised her and brought her with us," said Tinker.

Gabriel, curious and astonished, asked a dozen questions; and Tinker told him how they

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had got Sonia through the police spies at Prague station, and then on to the Böhmerwald. Gabriel was loud in the expression of his admiration of Tinker's readiness and resource; and then he protested his eagerness to be allowed to help her get right away to England when the time came to make the attempt. Tinker assured him that he should have a full share in the exploit.

Gabriel's enlightenment brought him and Sonia very much closer together. She found his sympathy and eagerness to help her very grateful; she found it no less grateful to have someone to whom she could unburden her overflowing soul on the matter of the woes of her country. They talked of Russia, its wrongs and their remedies, with an unceasing and insatiable interest. It is hardly to be wondered at that Gabriel's heart began to kindle with the fire of her enthusiasm. He began to feel that the redressing of those wrongs was the work for which he had been looking: a man's work, ready to the hand of a man.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE STRAYED EMPERORS

A FEW days later Solms, the forester, brought word to them of the coming meeting of the three emperors at the Schloss Viechtag about nine miles from the hunting-lodge. One of the many disabilities under which unfortunate emperors suffer is the impossibility of calling on one another and talking over matters of common interest without putting forward an elaborate reason for that natural action. The Emperor Franz of Transylvania had been suffering from an overloaded soul, overloaded with such matters as he could only properly unload on brother emperors. He needed a reason that could be given to the world for their calling on him; and he devised the pretext of an imperial hunt. The pretext was the more simple and transparent since the season of the year forbade the hunting of any animal but the rabbit; but neither the chancelleries nor the Press drew the attention of the rest of the world to this fact of natural history, and everyone was content.

Tinker alone of the human race did not share this contentment. He resented this imperial intrusion on the privacy of a desert island, and said many hard words about royal personages messing about where they were not wanted, till the happy thought of reckoning the emperors savages restored to him his tranquil mind. Then, coldly, he made many warlike preparations to receive them on this basis, should they by any chance invade his shipwrecked solitude.

But some days before the great hunt Elsie complained of a sore throat and headache. Tinker at once made her go to bed; and when the next morning she was no better, he left her in the care of Sonia and rode off to Kotzing, on one of Solms's ponies, to fetch a doctor. He found him at home and brought him back with him. He said at once that Elsie was sick of scarlet fever, but cheered them with the assurance that it promised to be a mild attack. In spite of that assurance, Tinker thought it best to ride back to Kotzing at once, and wire the news of her illness to his father, begging him come and bring a nurse with him. Then he set about helping Sonia nurse her; and he proved himself the better nurse of the two, for he had the trained fencer's deftness of touch and light-

ness of movement, admirable qualities in a sick room. Gabriel helped them with the night watching and established himself as a chief cook and caterer, delighted to be of service to Sonia, and rejoicing in this deepening of their intimacy. In three days Elsie was through the worst of the attack, beginning even to mend; and Tinker was reproaching himself for having wired to his father, since his coming might mean the end of their island life.

Late in the afternoon of the third day there was a very heavy thunder-storm; and the coolness after it was very grateful to the sick Elsie. She fell into a sound, healthy sleep. Early that afternoon the three emperors had gone forth with all pomp and circumstance to hunt rabbits. It was late in the afternoon when they had at last shaken off their officious train, for many of the gentlemen of the Emperor Paul and the Emperor Johan Jacob had been charged by their respective ministers to give them no chance of a word together. However, thanks to the Machiavelian devices of the Emperor Franz, they were at last foregathered alone in a secluded glade, their trains well lost; and there he poured upon his brother potentates a plan for propping up their somewhat shaky empires. It was an

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admirable and splendid plan; and it would be both captious and hypercritical to suggest that it might have been improved by being to some degree feasible. On it he discoursed, and discoursed, and discoursed, punctuating his discourse with the phrases, "America is the enemy!" "Japan is the enemy!" "England is the enemy!" "France is the enemy!"

At first the other emperors, who knew their Franz, gave it some attention; then they did not. But their cigars were excellent; the resinous air was pleasant and soothing; and they fell into a pleasant, drowsy musing. Then down came the storm and bolted them.

The Emperor Franz led the way, took the wrong path out of the glade, and put another two miles between them and their anxious train before the heavy rain changed to a steady down-pour, and they came to a halt under a spreading chestnut tree. In its shelter they shook their, fortunately, thick cloaks; the Emperor Paul and the Emperor Johan Jacob lighted fresh cigars; and the Emperor Franz proceeded to elaborate with eager enthusiasm the few score details of his plan he had not yet touched on. Polite and harmless men, his brother emperors endured him for a long while; then the Em-

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peror Paul said nervously, "Yes, yes; excellent! Excellent! But it's growing late. Hadn't we better be getting back to the Schloss?"

"Do you think you can find the way?" said the Emperor Johan Jacob doubtfully.

"Yes," said the Emperor Franz tartly, "I've been a hunter from a boy. Put me down in the most trackless forest or most dismal swamp in America—do not forget that America is the enemy—and I will take you in a bee-line to any place at any point of the compass."

"I wish we'd got a compass," said the Emperor Johan Jacob gloomily.

"If there is one thing I pride myself on it's my faculty of orientation," said the Emperor Franz cheerfully. "Follow me."

They followed him not too trustfully.

Three hours later the Emperor Johan Jacob, who had been complaining bitterly for two hours of the loss of his flask, which he had shaken out of his cloak under the spreading chestnut tree, kicked something that tinkled. It was the flask; further examination showed that it was the spreading chestnut tree.

The Emperor Paul invoked several Greek saints with a devotional warmth almost passionate. The Emperor Johan Jacob invoked no-

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body; he was drinking whisky. As he took the flask from his lips and handed it to the Emperor Paul, he interrupted the Emperor Franz's perfectly reasonable explanation of their circular progress in a manner far removed from the politeness of courts, by bidding him go and be hanged.

The Emperor Franz was deeply injured, almost outraged by the injunction. His brother potentates took no notice of him; and the Emperor Johan Jacob, a little warmed by the whisky, said more cheerily:

"What we want to do is to go north in a straight line. We'd better follow your star, Paul."

"What star?"

"Ursa Major."

"Look here," said the Emperor Franz fuming, "don't you steal my jokes! That's my joke: I've made it several times. And if we're going to follow anybody's star, we'd better follow mine."

"Which is that?" said the Emperor Johan Jacob coldly.

"The star of the War-lord is Mars," said the Emperor Franz proudly; and he pointed to B,13 in Cassiopeia.

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"No, thanks, I don't want to walk into the Adriatic to-night. I'm wet enough," said the Emperor Johan Jacob, with almost cantankerous sourness; and he set his face firmly towards the Great Bear.

Footsore and weary they walked for two miles in a hungry, gloomy exasperation. Then they saw a light on their right hand, and the Emperor Johan Jacob said, "Ha!"

"That's nothing," said the Emperor Franz. "It's only a will-o'-the-wisp, *ignis fatuus*, in a swamp. I know the forest well."

The Emperor Johan Jacob stopped and stared at him through the gloom; his mouth opened and shut with a click; at last he said thickly, "Then it *is* all right. I was afraid it *might* be a will-o'-the-wisp." And he turned and made for it.

It was steep going for a swamp; and fifty yards from the light they saw that it shone from a window in a low building.

"*Ignis fatuus! Ignis fatuus!*" growled the Emperor Johan Jacob.

"Now for a hearty welcome!" said the Emperor Franz hastily. "You'll see what loyalty is! They'll turn out into the wet forest to make room for us." And he had grown quite

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eloquent on the subject of a people's love before they reached the cottage.

They looked through the window to see a little boy rolled in a rug in an easy chair beside a bed in which lay a little girl. They tapped at the window; and the little boy unrolled himself, came to the window, opened it, and said sharply, "Who is it?"

"The Emperor—the three Emperors!" cried the Emperor Franz, with the proper dramatic intensity.

Tinker knew the voice, for he had heard it several times, had been presented indeed to its august possessor. But he heard it without any pleasure, for it was his strong desire that Elsie should sleep on undisturbed.

"We want food and lodging. Our hunting drew us to this side of the forest, and we are far from Schloss Viehtag," said the Emperor Franz.

"Our hunting—our hunting! His idiocy," murmured the Emperor Johan Jacob bitterly.

There was nothing to be done. Tinker kept his brow as clear of a frown as he could, and said, "I'll open the door."

The emperors moved to it hastily; he opened it, and barring their entrance said, "Before you

come in, your majesties should know that the lodge is full of scarlet fever. My sister is ill with it."

The Emperor Franz stepped back on to the foot of the Emperor Johan Jacob. Heedless of Tinker's presence, the Emperor Johan Jacob, as he leaped about on one leg with a lightness very creditable to his years, did justice to his nephew's clumsiness in precisely the same incandescent terms, though the language was different, in which Mr. Richard Brand had done justice to the like clumsiness of Mr. Oliver Brown.

It was some time before peace was restored; then the Emperor Franz, fuming with indignation at this last unkindly stroke of adverse fortune, cried angrily, "What, in the name of my sacred forefathers, are we to do now? We cannot run the risk of infection. We must think of our peoples. Scarlet fever late in life is a very dangerous complaint."

"I might give it the children," said the Emperor Paul.

"There are the foresters' huts a mile and a half away. There's no scarlet fever there," said Tinker, hoping to get rid of them.

"A mile and a half! I walk no miles and a

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half! Especially with a dancing bear in hunting-boots!" said the Emperor Johan Jacob, with cold ferocity. "I'm past the scarlet fever age." And he went into the hunting-lodge.

"What *are* we to do? What *are* we to do?" said the Emperor Franz heavily.

A happy thought came to Tinker, and he said quickly, "If the beacon light isn't too wet to burn, it would bring your gentlemen here with your horses. They must be hunting all over the forest for you."

"A beacon? Good. Light it—at once," said the Emperor Franz.

"I'd better get some paraffin, then," said Tinker; and he went into the lodge.

The Emperor Johan Jacob had kicked—with his untrodden foot—the smoldering fire into a blaze, and sat before it drying his wet boots. As Tinker came in, Sonia, who was sleeping in her clothes for nursing purposes, came out of her room with flushed face and eyes very bright with sleep.

"Will you get supper ready, Miss Carter? His Majesty has been lost in the forest. I'm going to light the beacon to bring his train here," said Tinker; and he hurried out with his can of paraffin.

The other two emperors went gloomily with him to the pile. Fortunately the bottom and middle of it were dry; and he poured the paraffin as far into the dry stuff as he could. Fortunately, too, he had emptied the can before the Emperor Franz awoke suddenly to his usual intellectual pre-eminence and grew voluble with instructions about the proper method of constructing and kindling beacons, then struck a match and tried to kindle the leeward side of it. Tinker made haste to kindle the windward side; and to his joy a little tongue of flame shot up into the mass of the drier pine branches.

At once he said, "I'll bring you out some supper," and ran back to the lodge.

In the lodge he found that the state of affairs had suffered a change. The Emperor Johan Jacob no longer scowled at the fire; he sat half turned towards the table observing Sonia set out plates and glasses, with the admiring eye of a connoisseur, and was in the middle of a gallant apology for disturbing her at so late an hour. Tinker helped her set out on the table the cold trout, cold stew, and cheese the larder provided; she brought a bottle of brandy from Count Freising's cellar, and invited the Emperor to fall to. He came to the table

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with alacrity; Tinker saw him settled at it with Sonia in attendance; looked into Elsie's room to find her still sleeping, and hurried out to his other guests.

The beacon was throwing up a dense cloud of steamy smoke from its upper part; but the bottom was already burning fiercely.

As he came up, the Emperor Franz said gloomily, "It will never burn bright, and I knew it. I ought to have taken it to pieces and remade it before it was kindled. It is useless—quite useless."

On the instant it gave him the lie by shooting up a bright column of flame ten feet in the air. It died down and rose again, and as it rose the second time they heard the faint, far away blast of a horn from the forest below.

"That's all right," said Tinker cheerfully. "Every forester will know at once that the fire is at Count Freising's hunting-lodge; they'll soon bring your gentlemen and your horses."

"You're a very clever little boy," said the Emperor Paul, gratefully.

"But his construction of beacons is entirely unscientific," said the Emperor Franz tartly; he resented the application of the epithet clever to anyone but himself.

They stood staring at the beacon; there came the sound of trampling and rushing through the bushes; the emperors started back into the shadow of a tree; and Gabriel hatless and pale burst into the clearing.

"Sakes alive! I thought you'd fired the house!" he cried.

"There's a sail on the horizon. They've seen the beacon and changed their course," said Tinker.

The faint blast of a horn came down from the forest above them.

"Ha! Another sail!" said Tinker.

Gabriel gasped and said bitterly, "This realism makes me tired."

The two emperors came out into the light, and the Emperor Franz said, "There seems to be a colony of you English in the Böhmerwald."

"And we are very fortunate in being here at a time when we can be useful to your Majesty," said Tinker, with a splendid effort at the courtier-like.

The Emperor Franz bridled. Tinker explained quickly to Gabriel the emperors' plight, and hurried him off into the hunting-lodge to bring supper out to them by the fire. They

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found the Emperor Johan Jacob too busy eating his supper and finding the exact terms in which to convey properly to Sonia his appreciation of her beauty to give much attention to their doings; but when Tinker, having loaded a tray with food, laid hands upon the brandy bottle, he said with unfeigned anxiety, "Don't let Franz drink all that brandy, youngster; bring the bottle back."

Tinker said that he would, and, accompanied by Gabriel bearing a small table and two chairs, he carried out the loaded tray to his other guests. He found the Emperor Paul happily engaged in poking the beacon with a large stick and the Emperor Franz in a perfect frenzy of enthusiastic intellectuality instructing him how to do it. At the sight of their supper they left their entrancing occupations on the instant, and as soon as it was set out, they fell upon it with the voracity of famished men. Gabriel slipped away back to the lodge at once; and presently, after filling their glasses, Tinker slipped away with the brandy bottle and took it back to the Emperor Johan Jacob. He found him in a high good humor, enjoying his supper, and enjoying the deftness of the compliments he was paying Sonia.

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She was smiling and blushing and fencing with him in full enjoyment of the natural expression of her womanliness. But by the door stood Gabriel, scowling on the far from unconscious emperor, with a ferocity which promised an early outburst of the democratic spirit. Tinker's quick eye was not long taking in the situation; and he knew far too much about emperors to risk anything of the kind. He hustled Gabriel out of the lodge to go and wait upon the other emperors. He again assured himself that Elsie slept, and then went backward and forward between the two supper tables, keeping on both the eye of the attentive host.

He was so busy with his duty that he had no time to do justice to these new developments of the shipwrecked situation; but he did contrive to draw Gabriel on one side and say:

"It is a king's ship coming to the island. There is no mistaking it. When they land, lie low; if they don't put you in irons to carry you off to Execution Dock, they'll string you up to the yard-arm at sight. Pirates get short shrift on desert islands."

Gabriel showed no gratitude at all for the kindly warning: his mood was too serious, not to say murderous; he only growled out some-

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thing about emperors getting a short shrift if he had his way with them—such an impression had the Emperor Johan Jacob's paternal attitude to Sonia made on his heated mind.

The emperors had but taken the edge off their appetites when the first contingent of their train, foresters, gentlemen of the household, officials, and detectives hurried into the glade, all in a state of anxious flurry. The Emperor Franz stopped eating to rate them soundly for their neglect of his safety and comfort, and to impress upon them the fact that had it not been for his superb woodcraft, he and his brother emperors would still be wandering in the more inhospitable depths of the forest.

A hasty chamberlain, protesting the anguish of anxiety he had suffered, dashed in upon the Emperor Johan Jacob, breaking the thread of an exceedingly neat compliment he was paying Sonia, and dashed yet more hastily out of the lodge when that potentate got to work on him his natural flow of picturesque language. His other gentlemen stood discreetly in the doorway awaiting his pleasure, which was that they should instantly bring him a bottle of champagne and any truffled delicacies they had with them, and that someone should at once set about

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making coffee. Deft servants took the matter in hand and in three minutes the table was covered with delicacies. Then he bade Sonia and Tinker sup with him, and with many gallant speeches drank her health many times.

Tinker was surprised and pleased with the manner in which Sonia received his compliments, and prevented too lively an expression of his admiration. It showed a knowledge of the way of the polite world he had never suspected in her. She showed herself specially skillful in dealing with his proposal that she should visit his court under the chaperonage of an Archduchess, a skill but little in keeping with her character of revolutionist. The emperor was still debating the matter with her over his coffee long after his brother emperors had finished their supper and grown wildly impatient to be gone, since it was after midnight. The Emperor Paul paced gloomily up and down talking impatiently to the saints of his church; the Emperor Franz raged, and now and again came to the door of the lodge and cried:

"Are you coming, revered and illustrious uncle?"

Always the wicked Emperor Johan Jacob chuckled and replied with sinister glee, "Be-

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ware of the scarlet fever, dear nephew, it is a very dangerous complaint at your age."

At last, however, he rose with a sigh, protesting his reluctance to tear himself away from Paradise, swearing that he had not spent so pleasant an evening for ten years, declaring that he would yet arrange that Sonia should visit his Court. He came out of the lodge with Sonia, into the glare of sixty or seventy torches, which lighted up her face brightly for its recognition by the amazed Red Ivan, who was one of the detectives watching over the safety of the imperial trio.

His brother emperors were already on their horses, the Emperor Johan Jacob's horse stood ready; but before he mounted he cried, "When we hunt, the old customs prevail. Gifts for our hosts."

So saying he drew a little case from his pocket, drew from it the blazing star of the Purple Eagle, and pinned it to the front of Sonia's dress, saying:

"Perhaps your eyes will teach the diamonds in this brooch to shine brighter."

Then he turned to Tinker and said, "And you, Monsieur Beauleigh? What is the gift for you? I know—Franz give him that hunting-

knife of yours. It's finer than mine. Boys love weapons—I was a boy myself once; and it's more than you ever were, Franz."

The Emperor Franz unfastened his knife from his belt, and handed it to Tinker with a splendid air of imperial generosity.

Tinker took it, murmuring his thanks; and then his face suddenly clouded and he said, "But, sir, steel cuts friendship; and it would—would never do if you grew unfriendly to me. I must give you this." And he held up a silver mark.

The Emperor Franz laughed loudly and cried, "Superstition! Superstition!"

"When we hunt, the old customs prevail. Take it—take it," said the Emperor Johan Jacob.

"To oblige you, revered and illustrious uncle," said the Emperor Franz, and he took the coin with a very superior smile.

The Emperor Paul brought up his horse and gave a little jeweled image of St. Catharine to Sonia and a like image of St. Paul to Tinker. Then they said good-by, turned their horses, and rode off, followed by their train. At the end of the clearing the Emperor Johan Jacob raised his hat and waved it.

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"Throw him a kiss," said Tinker mischievously, mindful of the gloomy Gabriel's reception of his warning against the danger of Execution Dock.

Sonia laughed and blew a kiss towards the vanishing emperor, who waved his cap again and shouted back, "Auf Wiedersehen!"

"I can't understand it! How can you be civil to that old reprobate?" Gabriel burst out.

"He's a very charming old gentleman," said Sonia, laughing.

"Besides, everyone humors royalties. Why, they're only like children—spoiled children," said Tinker, with his sagest air. And he went into the hunting-lodge to give free play to the pleasant process of the soothing of Gabriel.

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## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE TRIUMPH OF MR. OLIVER BROWN

WHEN he reached Folkestone, Sir Tancred began to hunt for the trail of the fugitive children, in a somewhat languid and perfunctory fashion. He was only concerned to keep himself clear of any charge of contempt of Court, to be able to declare that as the children had fled without his knowledge, so he had hunted for them without success. But when he found that they had not traveled to the Continent by the Folkestone-Boulogne route, he began to grow interested in the problem; and his interest was presently increased by a spice of rivalry, owing to his coming upon Mr. Oliver Brown in the hall of the hotel busily engaged in trying to obtain information.

The Calais-Dover route was obviously the next to try, and Sir Tancred tried it at once, with the result that he got a twelve hours start of Mr. Oliver Brown, who was slower satisfying

himself that they had not gone from Folkestone to Boulogne. In Paris, however, the Napoleon of the keyhole made up his lost ground by discovering before Sir Tancred that Tinker had taken tickets four hours before Sir Tancred. He found at once the hotel at which they had stayed, and began with a somewhat sanguine previousness to congratulate himself on their easiness to follow; for it took him three days hard work to discover that they had taken tickets to Darmstadt from a little station ten miles out of Cologne. He followed to Darmstadt, and took two days to learn that they had gone to Meiningen from a little station beyond Darmstadt. He knew Tinker's tactics now, and followed them with renewed assurance. At Meiningen he could find no trace of them, as was but natural, seeing that a little boy and girl had got into the train at Darmstadt, and two little girls had alighted at Meiningen. He tried back to Darmstadt.

In the meantime Sir Tancred was following hard on his heels; and since inquiries of Mr. Oliver Brown had kept the children fresh in men's minds, he began to catch him up. He also lost the trail at Meiningen, and after hunting carefully and patiently through that city, tried

back to Darmstadt. When, in a Darmstadt restaurant, he saw the face of the greasy, but woe-begone, little fat man light up at the sight of him, he perceived with joy that he too had lost the trail. Mr. Oliver Brown was indeed very near despair. He had searched Darmstadt through and through without finding a trace of the children. He was on the very point of making a desperate cast eastward, beyond Meiningen, when he saw the cheering sight of Sir Tancred. Now he had but the easier task of following *him*; sooner or later Tinker would communicate with him; and when father and son met, he would be at hand to pounce on Elsie. Therefore he followed him to Meiningen. Sir Tancred soon perceived that he was following him; and with extreme pleasure he sat about making it a task demanding his best skill and care. He brought a system of small hour evasions almost to perfection. Every other morning he would catch one of those Continental trains which have the curious habit, doubtless from a modest reluctance to put people to the trouble of traveling in them, of starting at 3:30 or 4:30 A. M. Always he contrived to have his faithful watcher awakened by apparent accident at the last possible moment so that he might

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have an acute anxiety about catching the train added to the pain of rushing about in the chill of the morning. Sometimes Sir Tancred would vary the proceedings by making every preparation to catch one of these modest trains, and then remain comfortably in bed while his chilled but still faithful watcher awaited his coming at a draughty station; and when they were traveling in the same train Mr. Oliver Brown had to be on guard at every station since Sir Tancred had a way of alighting at them after the train had started to leave them, and returning to the town they had left. In the towns, which owing to the tortuousness of their streets were suited to the diversion, they would have merry games of hide and seek, which brought Mr. Oliver Brown to the very verge of frenzied but perspiring distraction. He began to lose the greasy floridness of the successful man; but his calves grew harder.

All the while Sir Tancred kept himself as much in touch with Dorothy and his lawyer as his careful employment of Mr. Oliver Brown allowed, by letter and wire; and he came into an hotel at Frankfort one night to find a cable which had been awaiting him forty-eight hours. It ran:

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Tinker cables Elsie ill scarlet fever Count Freising's shooting-box Böhmerwald meet me and nurse Cologne 7:30 express to-morrow.

DOROTHY.

Sir Tancred was indeed annoyed that he should have received the cable so late; but he had just time to catch a train for Cologne, in which Mr. Oliver Brown also traveled; early next morning he found the hotel at which Dorothy and the nurse were staying; and soon after breakfast they started on their journey across Germany to the Böhmerwald. It was a slow, tedious journey; twice the trains failed to make a connection; and they did not reach Furth till the night on which Tinker entertained the strayed emperors to supper. But since they had not to walk part of the way, as the children and Sonia had done, they reached the hunting-lodge in the middle of the afternoon.

They found only Tinker and Elsie in, since she was so much better after her long sleep, that Tinker had sent Sonia out to take the air in the forest, fishing with Gabriel. Sir Tancred and Dorothy were indeed rejoiced to find her making her recovery; and after they had seen her, and the nurse had been installed in her room,

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Tinker and Dorothy sat about making tea, for used to Continental traveling, she had brought five pounds of tea with her. While the kettle was boiling, Tinker told them the story of his rescue of Sonia and the meeting with Gabriel.

At the end of it Sir Tancred said, "I suppose then that both these young people now belong to your party."

"Sonia does, of course; and I expect if we traveled on, Gabriel would want to come too," said Tinker.

"This passion of yours for the caravan is always interesting. I've never yet known you to travel a few hundred miles without attaching a small train to yourself," said Sir Tancred.

"On our last journey we started two and finished eleven; at least I think we were eleven. This time, so far, it's a Russian revolutionist and a brainy young American beef-packer."

"It's more sociable," said Tinker. "Besides, the people who join us always turn out quite nice."

And he looked at Dorothy.

"Oh, quite nice—quite nice!" said Sir Tancred quickly. "There's nothing to be said against your taste."

"Really, when all one's family combines to

heap compliments on one, it's embarrassing," said Dorothy.

Sir Tancred and Tinker smiled at her, and Tinker said with conviction, "Oh, you'll find Sonia and Gabriel quite nice."

"Am I to gather, from your saying you expect Gabriel to want to accompany you on any further travels, that you've started making a match between these two young people?"

"How can I help it, if they fall in love with one another?" said Tinker, blushing faintly.

"I guessed it," said Dorothy, laughing. "You're incorrigible—quite."

"I never tried to stop their falling in love. Why should I? I've got Elsie to look after. I can't go on looking after Sonia too," Tinker protested.

"I'm sure you'd be quite equal to it."

"Yes; but think of the time it would take. Elsie's really quite enough, don't you know?"

"Well, well, perhaps it is the best way out of the difficulty," said Dorothy.

"Talking about looking after Elsie, that sweep of a private detective, her uncle's accomplice, has been following me all about Germany," Sir Tancred broke in. "He ought to turn up some time to-morrow."

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"That beastly Brown! That is a nuisance, with Elsie too ill to travel!" cried Tinker, his face falling.

"I dare say we shall be able to deal with him," said Sir Tancred.

Tinker's face slowly became serene again; and he said thoughtfully, "Yes—this isn't a good place for that kind of person to come to."

An hour later Sonia and Gabriel returned from their fishing and were introduced to Sir Tancred and Dorothy. Both of them were charmed with Sonia, with her delightful manner no less than with her beauty. Dorothy had many inquiries about common friends to make of Gabriel, who dined with them; and after dinner they discussed the best way of getting Sonia off German soil into Italy or Switzerland, where there was no danger from high-handed attempts of the Russian police to kidnap her. They would have set about getting her out of the country at once, had they guessed that accident had shown Red Ivan her hiding-place.

The next morning Dorothy insisted on putting her wardrobe at the disposal of Sonia; and since she had not known at all how long her stay on the Continent might last, she had brought plenty of clothes with her. They were nearly of

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a size, and the gowns fitted. They filled Sonia's heart with a grateful content.

This important matter filled the morning. After lunch they were sitting over their coffee and cigarettes, when it occurred to Sir Tancred to ask Tinker how he had contrived to hide his trail so thoroughly. Tinker told him of the device of the fair wig and the frock; and at once Dorothy and Sonia begged him to dress up and let them see how he looked as a girl. Tinker wriggled a little at the proposal, but with polite resignation set about gratifying their whim. It was but a matter of a minute or two to slip on the frock and adjust the wig, and he came back to them. In the middle of their congratulations on the admirable manner in which he filled the part, the door opened with a sudden jerk, and Mr. Oliver Brown strode into the room, Napoleonic but perspiring, waved a paper in his hand and cried, "In the name of the lord of England, I call on you to surrender this little girl, Elsie Brand!" and seized Tinker by the arm.

For a breath everyone was taken aback; then Sir Tancred said, "Get out, you rascal!" and sprang to his feet; and Gabriel came round the table.

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Mr. Oliver Brown would have been flung out of the hunting-lodge on the instant; but Tinker cried in the shrill piping voice that matched the wig, "No, no; I'll go with him! You'll be sent to prison, if you interfere with him!"

Sir Tancred paused, weighing quickly the advantages of this way of sending Mr. Oliver Brown back to England with the wrong child. But Gabriel said cheerily, "The law of England is not going to trouble an American citizen over a little business like this, I guess. You just step outside with me, Mr. Brown. I've heard a lot about you, and I've been wanting to make your acquaintance. You come along."

"Stop! Stop!" cried Sir Tancred sharply. "Elsie is right—any violent resistance to the order of the Court will only make things worse."

Gabriel stopped and looked at Sir Tancred in a surprise which was soon lost in an expression of acute disappointment.

"Now, my man, out you go," said Sir Tancred to Mr. Oliver Brown. "The little girl is quite right; and she shall go with you. But first we have some arrangements to make. Wait outside till she is ready."

"No, no, Sir Tancred: you don't catch old birds with chaff," said Mr. Oliver Brown, lay-

ing his finger against his nose in a very vulgar fashion.

"Really, I should have thought a professional blackmailer would have been more intelligent," said Sir Tancred; and in a flash he had Mr. Oliver Brown by the scruff of the neck, thrust him to the door, and flung him headlong out of it. Mr. Oliver Brown rolled over on the greensward, and picked himself up muttering a fervid commentary on Sir Tancred's dexterity.

"Now, do you understand?" said Sir Tancred.

To all seeming Mr. Oliver Brown understood. He hobbled across to the cart which had brought him, climbed into it and sat down.

Sir Tancred came back into the lodge, and Tinker said, "This is awfully lucky, sir. If I go to England with this sweep, we shall gain a full week; and Elsie can go with Dorothy somewhere else as soon as she can travel."

"Yes; it does give us time. But I shall come and keep my eyes on you during your journey to England. It will stop that rascal from trying to take it out of you for the trouble he has had hunting Elsie."

Tinker packed a dress-basket with the clothes he would need on the journey; and under them

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he packed his cap and jacket, so that at the most favorable moment after their return the little fair-haired girl might vanish suddenly and utterly, since no one would dream that she was the same person as a little boy in knickerbockers and a Norfolk jacket. Then he bade them good-by, and came out of the hunting-lodge with Sir Tancred.

"You'll have to give me and my portmanteau a lift to the railway," said Sir Tancred. "I'm going to keep an eye on you during the journey, in case you should take it into your rascally head to ill-treat this child."

Mr. Oliver Brown said nothing against it; and whatever he looked against it, murderous glances are, after all, harmless.

The journey to Furth was quicker than the journey from Furth, and they caught an evening train. At the last moment, as Mr. Oliver Brown was taking tickets for himself and his little charge, Tinker begged Sir Tancred not to travel in the same compartment with them because he thought he saw his way to preventing Mr. Oliver Brown from ever forgetting the journey. Sir Tancred humored his innocent whim.

As the train steamed away from Furth, Mr. Oliver Brown, mightily pleased with his success,

set forth to his little charge the standard of conduct to be aimed at by little girls in his society; the chief rule was that there should be no nonsense. His little charge said nothing.

For the first part of the journey all went well; but at Schwandorf, changing quickly into the Nuremberg express, Mr. Oliver Brown tripped over his little charge's foot, and hit the hard platform hard with his full length. Rubbing himself and swearing, he got into the train and tweaked viciously his little charge's hair. A piercing shriek of anguish made everyone in the compartment jump, and brought an anxious group to the door, Sir Tancred first.

"What on earth have you been doing to the child?" he cried.

"He—he pulled my hair," sobbed the tearless Tinker.

Sir Tancred turned abruptly away; the rest of the group gave Mr. Oliver Brown their honest opinion of him.

A young American sitting opposite Tinker said heartily, "The man who lays a finger on a girl-child save in the way of kindness is a skunk and a blackguard: and that's about your size, stranger. Do it again and I'll break every bone in your rotten body."

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The train started, and Mr. Oliver Brown's face, already unbecomingly flushed, warmed to a hue exceedingly dangerous in a man of his apoplectic habit, as his little charge, still sobbing in a most affecting fashion, explained to the American and his two sisters that he was a rascally private detective in the pay of blackmailers. They took it in turn to give Mr. Oliver Brown their honest opinion of him, and passed on the facts in French to the Frenchman and his wife at the end of the compartment. The Frenchman at once obliged Mr. Oliver Brown with his opinion of him, and further improved the occasion to deliver a short address on the vices of Perfidious Albion, using Mr. Oliver Brown's mobile face, on which he affected to find them all imprinted, as an illustration. The French lady only said that it was a crying shame that such a little angel should be in the hands of such a debased wretch.

By that time everyone but Mr. Oliver Brown was in that complete content which comes from having relieved the heart. That worthy gentleman's face cooled slowly to a yellowish red; and he comforted his bruised spirit from a large flask of brandy with such success that presently he fell asleep. At the first snore his little charge

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borrowed the American's cane, hit the bulging pocket which held the flask, hard; leaned forward, listening intently, and said with shy pleasure, "It's running out. It would never do for him to get tipsy."

The other travelers were alike overjoyed and amazed by this display of resource on the part of the little girl. But when Mr. Oliver Brown awoke to his loss, he burst into language which compelled the young American to take him incontinently by the throat and choke him silent. After that there was peace; and one by one they fell asleep. His little charge saw to it that Mr. Oliver Brown did not snore.

At seven o'clock the train stopped at Gemunden for breakfast. With the economical thought that biscuits later would do very well for her, Mr. Oliver Brown left his little charge in the train, and hurried off to the restaurant. He was leaving it after an excellent meal, when a waiter tapped him on the arm, and said, "The little Engländerin says she is in your care, and you will pay."

He turned to see his little charge just risen from a table and shaking crumbs off her frock. There was no help for it; and Mr. Oliver Brown paid; his little charge had missed no

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expensive delicacy on the menu. He haggled over the bill and she went back to the train, when he reached it, justly apoplectic, she had finished relating with childish glee the incident to his fellow-travelers: what they said about his meanness was not the thing for a sensitive spirit.

Presently his little charge produced a large box of chocolates, and pressed them on the American girls. When they declared they would not rob her: "Oh," she said, "I've plenty of money; though of course this horrid person will try to steal it."

It had been Mr. Oliver Brown's instant thought.

"But he won't get the chance," she said, with happy conviction.

For a moment Mr. Oliver Brown almost doubted that he would; then he scoffed, internally, at so foolish a doubt.

At Frankfort there was a wait of two hours. His little charge clamored for a bath; Mr. Oliver Brown, a very anchorite in the matter of washing, refused. Five minutes later he but loosed her wrist to lift a glass to his lips, and his little charge was missing. He lost a minute or two paying for the drink; when he reached the station entrance he saw the hair of his little

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charge on the threshold of an hotel across the square; when he reached the hotel, she was already locked in a bathroom. Mr. Oliver Brown paid for the bath; rarely had payment been more painful to him. After paying, he was leading her through the hall, when she jerked him into the dining-room, and said, "We'll have our *déjeuner* here. Let go my wrist, or I'll scream."

Mr. Oliver Brown let go her wrist. She sat down at a table, and took up the menu. Mr. Oliver Brown sat down panting heavily. "Wait till I get you to London!" he said thickly.

His little charge laughed pleasantly, and ordered everything that caught her fancy; it was a good-sized fancy. At uncertain intervals during the meal she said firmly, "Don't eat like a pig."

They reached the station with very little time to spare; but in the bustle of getting the tickets he lost her again. He rushed from entrance to entrance of the station, and learned that no little fair-headed girl had left it. He rushed from platform to platform. At last he found her on the right platform watching wistfully their receding train. "The train's gone," she said. "What have you been doing?"

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Mr. Oliver Brown had a sudden fit of aphasia: his mouth opened and shut, but no words issued from it. However, he wrung his hands.

By missing that train they failed to catch the night train to Paris, and had to sleep at Cologne. Mr. Oliver Brown locked his little charge in her bedroom, and made a hearty and peaceful supper. After it he bethought himself of his little charge's money, and went to get it.

He stole noiselessly into her room, and fell loudly over the water-jug. A crescendo of piercing shrieks from her informed three stories of his mishap. When he had made his explanations, all of them promptly but shrilly contradicted, by his little charge, to two dozen affrighted guests, seven waiters, four chambermaids, and the manager, he had but little voice left. But later he managed to awake yelling from a nightmare in which his little charge sat on his chest and weighed several tons.

The journey to Paris was in comparison uneventful. It is true that his little charge was full of childish confidences to their fellow-travelers about Mr. Oliver Brown's condition in life as private detective in the pay of blackmailers;

but he was growing used to the frankness of the world, and he endured. At the Paris terminus, however, she stumbled clumsily against him, with the result that he hit his knee hard against a fine upstanding specimen of the Saratoga trunk; and he slapped her face. There was a piercing scream of anguish; a burst of childish confidences shrieked out between heartrending sobs; and four gendarmes were put to it to preserve Mr. Oliver Brown from the attention of the crowd, one of whom had thoughtfully unknotted a rope from a trunk with a view to suspending him from anything handy.

After the crowd and an interview with a police commissioner to whom he showed his credentials, and from whom he obtained another frank opinion of his merits, Mr. Oliver Brown was, for a while, a broken man. He made terms with his little charge; and she traveled to London with Sir Tancred. At Charing Cross, as he handed her over, Sir Tancred said to her in the most encouraging fashion, "I'll drive round later and thrash these two hounds, if they have been ill-treating you."

Mr. Oliver Brown heaved a deep sigh of relief when the lodging-house door closed on him and his little charge. She went upstairs before

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him carrying her dress-basket, and they found Mr. Richard Brand, flushed and flurried, packing a portmanteau in great haste. "You've got her!" he cried joyfully, scarcely glancing at his little niece, whose untidy hair hid most of her face.

"I've got her," growled his friend, sitting down heavily. "And next time I bring anything across Europe, it'll be a Bengal tiger—not caged. There'll be more comfort in it."

"What? You've had trouble with her—with Elsie?" cried Mr. Richard Brand, with utter incredulity. "But I can't stop to talk! I'm off to the Argentine! An old matter has turned up! It's a check! The blackguards say it's a forgery. There's a warrant out!"

"And you're going to take her with you!" Mr. Oliver Brown almost shrieked.

"Take her with me! The brat! You're mad! I might as well advertise my route in the *Mail*! They couldn't fail to track me! No! I've had a paper drawn up appointing you her guardian and all that. It's signed and witnessed in the top right-hand drawer there. You'll bring over my share of the boodle, when the Beaulleighs pay up. Advertise in the Buenos Ayres papers where I'm to meet you. Here! Lend me

a hand with these straps! Hurry up! I must get out of this!"

A cold sweat bathed Mr. Oliver Brown as he gazed fearfully at his little charge, who with her back to them was unstrapping her dress-basket. In a daze he helped his friend strap the portmanteau, and carry it downstairs. In a daze he saw him drive away in a cab, and came upstairs mopping his brow. He scarcely saw the small boy in knickerbockers who, with his cap tilted forward and coat-collar turned up, passed him on the first-floor landing going down. At the door of the room, however, he pulled himself together, and opened it with decision. The room was empty.

He had barely grasped this fact, when he saw that the top right-hand drawer was open, its smashed lock dumbly eloquent of the poker. Then a wig of long fair hair, hanging over the back of a chair, caught his eye. He gasped, sat down on another chair; and gazed at it earnestly.

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## CHAPTER NINE

### THE INTERVENTION OF THE POLICE

**T**INKER ran down the street hard, turned the corner, and fell into a decorous walk. As he went, he did not struggle to maintain the reticence in public places which good manners demand, but laughed with unrestrained joy. The people he met brightened, and went on their way with a cheerier step for the sight of so merry a child. But presently he turned grave as his conscience began to prick him about the document he had abstracted. He enjoyed the fullest and most assured conviction that, according to the higher law, he had acted with entire rectitude. But it is the human law which weighs on the human heart; and he doubted his right to the possession of the document. He settled his doubts and the matter by tearing it across and across, and dropping the pieces down a grating in the gutter. Then, with a conscience at peace, he hailed a hansom and drove to Berkeley Square.

He found Sir Tancred reading his accumulated letters in the library. At the sight of Tinker he cried, "What! They've found you out and let you loose already!"

Tinker told him of Mr. Richard Brand's hasty trip to the Argentine, how he had obtained and dealt with the document which consigned Elsie to the guardianship of Mr. Oliver Brown, and how he had left that worthy with a fair wig and child's frock to show for his pains in traversing the continent of Europe.

Sir Tancred laughed now and again during the course of the story, and at the end of it he said:

"You've certainly done a good morning's work. We've seen the last of those rascals—or at any rate we shall see no more of them for a long time."

So far he has proved right. Doubtless Mr. Richard Brand still studies with anxious eagerness the agony columns of the Argentine papers. Doubtless, too, he has by now begun to execrate Mr. Oliver Brown for having sold Elsie to the Beauleighs and kept the whole of the proceeds of the sale. He is not likely to write to him demanding an account, since their long intimacy has given him every assurance that his whilom

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friend would lose no time applying to Scotland Yard for any reward offered for information leading to his capture. Perhaps he is now a shepherd, tending his flock on some Argentine pasture.

Tinker was silent a little while, revolving with a pleasant smile the memories of the journey of Mr. Oliver Brown's life. Then he said, "Well, I've had a good deal of fun out of it. But it's been an anxiety; and I'm glad it's over."

"Do you think you're too tired to start back to the Böhmerwald to-night? You've put in a lot of hard traveling the last day or two," said his father.

"I'm quite fit, sir. And if we don't start to-night, we shall miss the connection with the Cologne-Frankfort express, and lose twenty-four hours," said Tinker briskly.

"Well, I'm not at all comfortable about leaving them in the Böhmerwald with Miss Tresiat-ski. You never know what odd clue may have put the Russian police on her trail, though you don't seem to have left any tracks. Of course, Arnott is there; but he's not had the experience to deal with a matter like that."

"I've been wondering whether any of the

detectives who were watching over the Emperor Paul might have recognized Sonia. There were sure to be a good many of them," said Tinker thoughtfully.

"By Jove, there is that! I never thought of it! Yes; we had better start to-night," said Sir Tancred.

Accordingly they caught the boat train to Dover that night. They were fortunate in their trains, and only missed one connection. Only two other passengers got out of the train at Furth, a big German, plainly from his arrogant air an official of sorts, and a thickset, red-haired, red-bearded man with the Tartar cheek-bones and eyes. Tinker's sharp eyes were struck by the pair at once; and while their luggage was being piled on a barrow, he and his father watched them. As he left the station Sir Tancred said curtly, "Policemen."

"I wonder—I wonder if that red-headed one is Red Ivan," said Tinker.

"It might be. And if it is, we've only got here just in the nick of time," said Sir Tancred.

He and Tinker followed their luggage to the inn where they could hire a cart for the next stage of the journey. Sir Tancred was willing to pay for speed; and a horse was harnessed

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in a very few minutes. While they waited, the two policemen came into the inn and ordered beer.

As the cart started Sir Tancred said, "Probably they'll spend some time drinking."

They drove straight to Kotzing, looking back often for signs of their fellow-travelers. They saw nothing of them; the road behind them was always empty and at Kotzing they lunched. But as they drove away from the inn after lunch, a cart clattered up to it; and in it were the two policemen.

"It begins to look as if it were Red Ivan," said Sir Tancred.

"It does," said Tinker. "But perhaps they're only detectives going to raid some of the illicit stills where the foresters make their spirits."

"Let's hope so," said Sir Tancred.

The forest, or the probable errand of the two men, recalled to Tinker's mind how Andrew Beg had dealt with Mr. Richard Brand and Mr. Oliver Brown under the belief that they were poachers, and set him wondering how the foresters of the Böhmerwald would deal with men they believed to be revenue officers.

He thought that it might be worth seeing;

and he said, "I think we'd better warn Solms, as we pass his hut."

"We will," said Sir Tancred.

They stopped at the forester's, and told him that two policemen were driving into the forest, and if he had any friends engaged in distilling, he had better let them know. Solm's face turned very black; and they had not gone a hundred yards from his cottage when his horn rang out in three long sustained blasts. Then every two or three minutes during the rest of the way to the hunting-lodge they heard those blasts echoed from different quarters, some near, some faint and far away, on a score of horns.

"The hornet's nest is beginning to buzz," said Sir Tancred, with a pleasant smile.

"It sounds as if there was going to be some fun," said Tinker cheerfully.

Since they had been informed by wire that they would arrive that afternoon, everyone was at the hunting-lodge awaiting them, eager to hear of Tinker's expedition to England. But there was no time for that story; they had to deal with an emergency; and Sir Tancred at once told them of the coming of Red Ivan and the German policeman. At the news Sonia fell into a state of extravagant and pitiable terror,

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amazing to the others used only to the police methods of non-Asiatic countries; and Gabriel and Sir Tancred were hard put to it to reassure her.

After some discussion it was decided that Dorothy and Sonia, with Elsie and the nurse, should betake themselves to Gabriel's camp and take up their abode there till the danger was over. Sir Tancred and Gabriel would stay behind to deal with Red Ivan. Before they started Dorothy implored Sir Tancred not to get into a quarrel with the policemen; and Sonia looked at Gabriel as if she would like to implore him also to avoid that danger, but she did not. Sir Tancred laughed at the idea that he could do anything so foolish; and reassured, they hurried away.

Sir Tancred and Gabriel lighted cigars and sat down to wait quietly. Tinker had disappeared.

Presently Gabriel said glumly, "I suppose we shan't be able to see the ladies for some days. These swine won't be put off by finding that Miss Sonia is not here. They'll hang about and search the forest."

"I think not," said Sir Tancred. "After all, these policemen may be coming to the forest on

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some other business; and it occurred to the ingenuous mind of Tinker to suggest to Solms that they might be revenue officers coming to raid the illicit stills. The foresters are gathering."

"He's a wonder, that boy!" said Gabriel.

"Well, you see, he's seen a good deal of the world; and he's always been taught to see it with his eyes open. It's no wonder he doesn't miss many points," said Sir Tancred.

They sat talking about him for half an hour; and then he rode into the glade on one of Solms's ponies:

"They're coming; and a dozen foresters have come already. They're looking pretty savage, and they've brought their guns. It doesn't look as if Red Ivan was going to have much of a time!" he cried cheerfully; and his sunny blue eyes were brimming over with sparkling delight.

"Well, you're on no account to get mixed up in it. Indeed, you're not to leave me for the rest of the afternoon. There may be bullets flying about; and that is a game at which spectators get no good," said Sir Tancred.

"Very well, sir," said Tinker, losing some of his brightness.

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Presently they heard the creaking of cart-wheels; the cart came out of the trees, across the clearing, and stopped before the door. Red Ivan and the German policeman jumped down, thrust open the door without knocking, and rushed into the hunting-lodge, revolvers in hand.

"Where is Sonia Tresiatski?" cried the German policeman in a very gruff voice, as they pulled up short at the sight of Sir Tancred and Gabriel sitting quietly smoking.

"Take off your hats," said Sir Tancred quietly.

The policeman gasped and his eyes opened wide:

"Take off my hat? Do you give me orders?" he cried.

"Take off your hats," said Sir Tancred in the same quiet voice.

The policeman swelled and flushed and cried, "I am Lieutenant Fritz Schumacher, second superintendent——"

"Take off your hats," said Sir Tancred.

"Of the Police of Ratisbon!" the policeman finished in a roar.

"Take off your hats," said Sir Tancred.

The purple policeman thrust his revolver into his pocket, slammed his right fist into his left

hand, and roared, "Where is Sonia Tresiatki? Answer me! Deliver her to me!"

"Take off your hats," said Sir Tancred.

"Answer me! Will you answer me! Where——"

"Take off your hats," said Sir Tancred.

Words failed the purple policeman. He executed a short double-shuffle in the extremity of exasperation, and wrung his hands. Red Ivan put his revolver in his pocket, gripped Lieutenant Schumacher's arm, and muttered in his ear that they had come for Sonia Tresiatki, but were not getting on, and took off his hat. Lieutenant Schumacher glared at him a moment, then tore off his hat.

"Where is Sonia Tresiatki?" he said huskily.

"Now what on earth do you low-born swine mean by coming into the house of a noble with your hats on, and without knocking? Is it that you have the manners as well as the faces of pig-dogs?" said Sir Tancred, and he contrived to get into his quiet, even voice an intensity of insulting contempt which pierced even the thick hide of the policeman.

Lieutenant Schumacher mopped at his purple brow with his cap; he had lost his official trucu-

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lence, and wore the meek air of a detected sheep:

"We—we—did not know, your excellency," he stammered.

"Then remove your pig-dog faces from my sight," said Sir Tancred, still gently.

"But where—where is Sonia Tresiatski? I—I—have a warrant," said Lieutenant Schumacher, shuffling his feet miserably.

"What's it got to do with me? She's not here. Remove your pig-dog faces from my sight," said Sir Tancred.

"But—but—my friend saw her here—only a week ago."

"Doubtless his pig-dog face frightened her away," said Sir Tancred. "Remove your pig-dog faces from my sight."

"But—but—I have a warrant. It is my duty to search the hunting-lodge," said Lieutenant Schumacher, again mopping his purple brow.

"Remove your pig-dog faces from my sight," said Sir Tancred.

"Will—will your excellency inform us where she is?" said Lieutenant Schumacher.

"Remove your pig-dog faces from my sight," said Sir Tancred.

The hopelessness of trying to deal with a man

so prone to suffer from fixed ideas seemed suddenly to dawn on Lieutenant Schumacher; he rolled his eyes helplessly and shrugged his shoulders.

Red Ivan whispered in his ear; and he said with a forlorn air, "Good-by, your excellency. Apologies for disturbing you," and bowed himself out, after Red Ivan.

As the door shut, Gabriel said in a hushed voice, "Well, of all the bluff—it was the limit. Why, if you'd treated one of our policemen like that he'd have fanned you."

"Fanned me?" said Sir Tancred.

"Clubbed you."

"Ah, this is a comparatively free country," said Sir Tancred.

"But—but you treated them like dogs," said Gabriel.

"Why not? They are," said Sir Tancred.

"But they stood it," said Gabriel.

"You see, they were rather in a hole. My German is very good; and they didn't know who I was. I might have been an Archduke."

"It's a wretched sight to see human beings, fine, upstanding men, grovelling before a fellow-creature just because he's an Archduke," said Gabriel, shaking his head.

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"You may just as well grovel before a fellow-creature because he's an Archduke as before a politician because he's an Irishman," said Sir Tancred. "What are they doing, Tinker?"

"They're jawing with their driver," said Tinker, who was watching them through the window.

"I suppose they're going to set about a search of the neighborhood. Well, well; they'll have the foresters about their ears soon," said Sir Tancred.

"Suppose they should hit the trail to my camp?" said Gabriel, rising hastily.

"We shall be there," said Sir Tancred.

"They're getting into the cart," said Tinker.

When the two policemen had taken their seats, the cart did not turn and take the downhill, homeward road. It came straight on past the hunting-lodge, and went up the hill into the forest.

"Now, you go down to the camp, Arnott; and Tinker and I will stalk the cart and keep an eye on these policemen. You'd better take a revolver with you."

"I've got one," said Gabriel, taking it out of his hip pocket and putting it into a side pocket for quicker use.

"You won't have to use it; but it's just as well to be armed. If you were unarmed, these swine would be as likely as not to shoot you like a dog."

Gabriel nodded; and they went out. He took the path to the left, down to the camp; Sir Tancred and Tinker went straight up the hill after the cart. Sir Tancred went swiftly, with long, light strides; Tinker trotted with an equal lightness by his side; and presently they heard the creaking of its wheels. They hurried on till they caught a glimpse of it, and made sure that the two policemen were still in it; then they slowed down to a pace which kept them at the same distance from it.

Presently there came a startling yell from in front.

"The German policeman! They've found the foresters!" cried Tinker joyfully.

Then there came another yell; and the voice of the German policeman rose in a roar of execration punctuated by sharp cracks.

"They're stoning them," said Sir Tancred.

Then the creaking of the cart wheels came nearer and louder; Sir Tancred caught Tinker's arm, and drew him behind a tree. Then the cart, swaying and jolting, came tearing round

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the corner. The horse galloping; the driver lashing it; and the stones hurtling round the two bumping policemen. Every time one got home, the stricken man, driver or policeman, yelled; and the yell was re-echoed from a dozen throats by the young foresters who came racing down the path behind it, each of them stopping short every twenty seconds to shy a stone. Sir Tancred and Tinker ran after the excited procession; saw the cart cross the clearing in which the hunting-lodge stood; and heard it clatter down the hill in a diminuendo of yells as it passed away to where distance lent a distinct enchantment to the din.

Tinker was laughing joyfully, and Sir Tancred was smiling with no less joy.

"They'll have about five miles of that," said Sir Tancred. "And they'll know a good deal more of the inhabitants of the Böhmerwald when they've done than they did before they started."

They stood listening till the last faint yells died away far down in the forest. Then Tinker said, "They should have pulled up in the clearing and frightened off the foresters with their revolvers."

"I don't think they'd have succeeded. Be-

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sides, the foresters got them on the run at once; and once on the run, it takes better stuff than those gentry are made of to pull up and start fighting. But come along, they may have heard that yelling down at the camp and be fancying that we have got into all kinds of trouble. And we've got to arrange things to get out of this part of the country at once. In three days there'll be a couple of companies of infantry up here, hunting about to avenge the outraged majesty of the police. It will be impossible to have Miss Tresiatki in this neighborhood. Besides, we shall be arrested for having instigated the foresters to stone those purple and magenta policemen."

They went briskly down to the camp, and found Dorothy and Sonia very anxious, for one burst of yells had reached their ears through an opening in the woods. They had fancied that they had recognized Tinker's voice; and really believed that the chorus came from his unaided lungs. Elsie, on the other hand, was quite cool and at ease, maintaining that though the yells might well have been an unsupported effort of Tinker, he would not have yelled if he had been in trouble himself, but only if someone else was. She knew him well.

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As they walked back to the hunting-lodge, Sir Tancred told them of the stoning of the policemen, and broached the question of immediate flight. While Dorothy and Sonia made tea, Sir Tancred and Tinker and Gabriel worked out their route from Count Freising's map of the Böhmerwald and the maps Tinker had brought with him; and by the time they had finished their tea, they had settled on it. Then Sir Tancred went down to Solms's hut to hire ponies and Tinker went with him. They found Solms cleaning a gun, and three foresters of substance sitting with him drinking beer. At once he began deploring the audacious recklessness of the young bloods of the forest in assaulting the police, and pointed out with emphatic care that he had never stirred out of his hut, as the three foresters with him could testify. When he learned their errand, he promised them a dozen ponies and three guides for eight o'clock the next morning. They discussed with him the measures the authorities would take to punish the perpetrators of the assault on the police; and he held out but little hope of their ever finding them. Sir Tancred expressed his sincere hope that they never would. He bade them good-by and came back to the hunting-lodge.

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In the meantime Gabriel had been striking his camp with the help of Dorothy and Sonia; they went down to him and helped carry his tent, which was of a very portable nature, and his stove up to the hunting-lodge. Dorothy and Sonia packed the fewest possible clothes they would need, devised makeshift riding skirts for themselves and the nurse, who elected to go with them rather than return by train, and then packed provisions. Elsie was their chief difficulty. She was, indeed, recovering fast from her fever; but she was not strong enough for a long journey on a pony. They could not leave her with the nurse at the hunting-lodge lest they should be frightened and annoyed by the police. They could not send her back to England by train under the care of the nurse, since her fellow-travelers would be liable to catch scarlet fever from her. They debated the matter at length; and at last Tinker came to their aid with a suggestion:

"The Princesses in the Arabian Nights were always very delicate, and they used to travel about in horse-litters. Couldn't we make one for Elsie?" he said.

Sir Tancred and Gabriel welcomed the suggestion, and set about making one out of two

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light poles and a stout blanket. When it was done, it was rough-looking to the eye; but it served its purpose. Elsie could lie at full length on it, and travel at her ease.

They were ready to start at eight the next morning; and Solms came up, with the guides and ponies, to bid them good-by. To him was intrusted the business of taking the luggage they left behind them to Furth, and putting it on the train. Then they started, an imposing procession. Tinker led the way, with at least the pride of a general at the head of an invading army, riding beside one of the young foresters, their guides. Then came Elsie in her litter under the charge of another forester and the nurse. Then came Sonia and Gabriel. After them came the baggage ponies in charge of the third guide; and Dorothy and Sir Tancred brought up the rear.

When they had gone a few hundred yards, Sir Tancred cried, "After long years you've got your genuine caravan at last, Tinker."

"Yes, sir," Tinker cried back. "But I can't make up my mind quite what kind of a caravan it is. This forest won't do for a desert—really."

Slowly everyone began to make suggestions.

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Gabriel suggested that they could be a band of early American settlers journeying into the Wilderness; and Sir Tancred capped it by the suggestion that they could be a band of later emigrants traveling by the old Mormon trail into Utah. Dorothy and Gabriel rejected that suggestion with some heat; and Tinker rejected both suggestions on the grounds that a caravan was essentially an Oriental thing, and that it was no good pretending that you were traveling through a forest when you were traveling through a forest. The subtilty of this objection produced a blank silence, while his elders tried to work it out, and gave him an uninterrupted pause to discuss the matter with Elsie. Elsie very pertinently observed that since she was in a horse-litter, or rather a pony-litter, the simplest thing was to be an Eastern Princess.

With his usual clarity of intellect Tinker perceived the perfect justice of the contention; and he said firmly, "The caravan is the caravan of the Prince Camaralzaman bringing back the Princess of China. Elsie is the Princess of China and I am Prince Camaralzaman."

Everyone was relieved at having the matter thus settled for them, and Sir Tancred said, "And what are *we* exactly?"

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"Oh, you're the ladies and gentlemen of our train," said Tinker.

"Why does your Highness always cast yourself for the star part?" said Dorothy.

Well, someone has to be Prince Camaralzaman, don't you know?" said Tinker, with his seraph's smile.

They pushed steadily on, often dismounting when the path ran steeply up-hill, so that Dorothy and Sonia never grew stiff from being too long in the saddle, all through the day. At noon they lunched, and in the afternoon they halted for another hour and made tea. It was delightful traveling in the warm scented forest shade, with now and again, through some break in the trees, a glorious view of wide stretches of forest and mountain. Gabriel, at Sonia's side all the time, leading her pony over rough places, sharing her enjoyment of the beauties of the forest, found all his earlier experiences of traveling, in Europe, or in the wilder parts of the United States, dwarfed to insignificance. At night when they had pitched their camp and supped and sat round the fire talking idly in a pleasant weariness after their journey, it seemed to him that he and Sonia had been drawn very close together; and assuredly her eyes

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were very soft and kind when they rested on him.

Elsie, the nurse, Sonia, and Dorothy slept in Gabriel's tent. Tinker and Sir Tancred and Gabriel slept rolled up in blankets on piles of dry bracken the foresters had gathered; it was the very night for sleeping at the sign of the Beautiful Star, warm and dewless. They were up betimes and very hungry. After breakfast they set out again on their journey to the south. They enjoyed just such another day as the day before; their guides led them by paths which did not pass through any village or even any of the little clusters of foresters' huts. In all the three days they only met two strangers, foresters who went with them a mile or two, talking with their guides, exchanging the news of the forest and telling them which were the easiest paths for the caravan. On the evening of the third day they pitched their camp on the side of a hill on the edge of the forest, between Hofkirchen and Gaishofer, looking down over the Danube and the railway on to the lights of Orienburg, some five or six miles away. They were sorry indeed that they had come to the end of their forest journeying.

Early next morning Sir Tancred and Tinker,

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who was always eager for strange places, crossed the Danube by the ferry and walked to Orienburg. There Sir Tancred, who had looked to find only a carriage, was lucky enough to find and hire a motor car. They drove back to the ferry, and leaving it with the chauffeur in charge of it, they went quickly back to the camp. It was but a matter of a few minutes for Sir Tancred to explain the happy change in their plans produced by the car, for Sonia to pack her clothes in a little dress-basket and bid them good-by; and he hurried down the hill and into the motor car. Sonia had with her Dorothy's passport; she was to travel as Lady Beauleigh; and Sir Tancred proposed to motor to Rosenheim, some seventy miles away, take the train to Innsbruck, bring her through the Tyrol to Venice, and there take a steamer for England.

After they had gone the rest of the party went quietly to Passau. There they paid their guides lavishly and dismissed them, and set about making inquiries for a nursing home where Elsie and the nurse might stay till the risk of her conveying infection had passed. They found one on the outskirts of the town; and having established her in it, they took a train for Munich on their way home. Gabriel had

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turned a somewhat spiritless companion; during the journey he was dull and meditative and given to deep sighs. Now and again he worked himself up into a fit of feverish anxiety about the safety of Sonia.

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## CHAPTER TEN

### TINKER ASSUMES THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF A PARENT

**I**N Paris they received the telegram from Sir Tancred which they had been anxiously awaiting. He wired from Venice that he and Sonia had come safely across the Tyrol and were on board a London-bound steamer. Dorothy and Tinker lingered a few days in Paris, then journeyed to London in time to be at home to welcome the fugitives, and Gabriel came with them. On the next day Sonia and Sir Tancred arrived; Dorothy's passport had carried Sonia over the German frontier without trouble; at the Italian frontier the officials had not even asked for passports.

Sonia was glad indeed to be in England and relieved of her fears. The sea voyage, too, had quite healed her nerves after the strain they had suffered; her pallor had lost altogether its waxen deadness and acquired a certain warmth

of tint of a healthiness which added greatly to its charm. Her great eyes were brighter than ever. She was for getting into communication at once with the Russian revolutionaries in London, and arranging her future in accordance with their advice or instructions. Of this Dorothy would not hear, and Sir Tancred supported her. They had their fears as to the uses to which so beautiful a creature as Sonia might be put to further the cause of Russian freedom. Dorothy, moreover, taking the liveliest interest in the manifest attraction she and Gabriel had for one another, could not, in her womanly way, bear the thought that an inopportune devotion to the cause of Freedom should check the development of a promising love affair. She had, indeed, formed the design of dispatching Sonia, a happy bride, to the safety of the United States. As she pointed out, Sonia as the daughter-in-law of a millionaire could do more for the cause of Freedom by subscriptions than ever she could do by personal plotting. Accordingly, they pressed Sonia with such urgency and such a show of good sense to stay with them quietly for a few weeks till she had quite recovered from the strain of her flight that she soon yielded gratefully to their pres-

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sure. She might have clung more firmly to her original purpose, had not the few weeks rest meant that she would see at any rate that much more of Gabriel.

But her acceptance of the invitation forced painfully upon her attention her distressing lack of clothes; and after giving the latter some careful thought she applied to Tinker, of whose ingenuity and knowledge of the world she had, with reason, formed the highest opinion.

She went up to the sitting-room at the top of the house which had been devoted to the uses of him and Elsie, and found him somewhat painfully engaged in compiling an informing letter to brighten her convalescent existence in Passau.

"Tinker, my angel, do I disturb you?" she said.

"Not a bit," said Tinker, pushing the pen and paper from him with alacrity and relief.

"I've come to ask your help."

"What in?" said Tinker eagerly.

"I want money—oh, for lots of things—for clothes and to pay you and your father back all the money you spent on bringing me from Dresden here."

Tinker's face fell and he said slowly, "What

a pity you didn't tell me yesterday, and I could have lent you plenty. But I paid Dorothy back all I hadn't spent of the two hundred I borrowed to take Elsie away to the Continent with. Of course, the railway fares and things are all nonsense. I shouldn't let you pay me; and I'm sure my father wouldn't let you pay him."

"But I must!" cried Sonia earnestly, flushing a little.

"Oh, well, of course you shall some day," said Tinker quickly, perceiving that she really was in earnest in the matter. "Only there's no hurry about it. But you must have clothes—and at once. I tell you what. I'll borrow the money from Dorothy, and hand it on to you."

"Oh, angel child, you do not understand. I do not want to borrow the money. I want you to help me to sell some pearls."

Sonia drew from her pocket a necklace of fair-sized, finely matched pearls, and handed it to him.

Tinker looked at it with something of the air of a connoisseur, and said, "These are all right. Necklaces of this size are marked about three hundred pounds in jewelers' shops. I can help you sell these easily."

"I knew you could!" cried Sonia.

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"But it seems a pity to sell them. You may want them for a dance or the opera some time," said Tinker thoughtfully.

"I do not like them much. My aunt gave them to me, and she is a reactionary," said Sonia, and her lips curled.

"Still they're very pretty; and you might want them to wear. This revolution won't last forever, don't you know?" said Tinker, with the air of a cautious sage. "Why don't you pawn them? You'd get a good deal on them."

"Yes, yes! Of course that is what I should like better! Oh, much better! How wise you are! But do you know how to do it?" cried Sonia.

"Rather," said Tinker. "Before my father married Dorothy he used to live pretty high—expensively, you know—and we used to be hard up sometimes; so I've been with him several times to raise money on things—on our way to the station to go somewhere. We'll go to Uncle Vaughan with your pearls."

"Uncle Vaughan? That is funny. I did not know that in English noble families members were pawnbrokers," said Sonia.

Tinker explained that all pawnbrokers stood in the avuncular relation to their clients, and

bade Sonia go and put on her hat and they would sally out on their quest.

He was waiting for her in the hall when, just as she came down the stairs, there was a knock at the door, and Gabriel came in. At once he offered himself as an escort to them; but Tinker was firm in his refusal, alleging that they were bound on a secret errand and could have no third person with them. He went upstairs, therefore, with a somewhat disappointed air to confer with Dorothy.

Tinker and Sonia drove to the pawnbroker's; and she was delighted with the little box into which they shut themselves for the transaction of their business, and much impressed by the air of affairs with which Tinker conducted it. The clerk recognized him at once, and thanks to the recognition and Tinker's explanation that Sonia was their guest and wanted some money to go on with, no difficulties were raised about lending her money on the pearls. There was some discussion about the amount of the sum; and in the end, owing to Tinker's firmness, Sonia came out of the office with a hundred and twenty pounds in her pocket. They were both jubilant; and then Tinker took her to the shops where Dorothy generally procured her clothes and hats.

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Luckily she found a charming summer costume which fitted her, and changed into it at once. Then she chose stuff for other gowns for the evening and morning and the afternoon, hats to suit them, shoes, and all the other garments needful to complete her wardrobe. Tinker bore the process with great patience. Now and again she said seriously, "I must not be extravagant." But her moderation was not of a violence to withstand utterly the temptation of pretty things, a temptation strengthened by the consideration of the effect of any of them on Gabriel. But she was on the whole moderate; and did not make nearly such a hole in the one hundred and twenty pounds as might have been expected, and indeed might have been forgiven her.

After lunch she asked Tinker to act as intermediary between herself and Sir Tancred in the matter of the repayment of the cost of her journey to England. Tinker held out no hopes of success in the mission, and he was justified of his lack of hope, since Sir Tancred refused firmly to be repaid, declaring that Sonia's expenses had been his contribution to the cause of Russian freedom; and with that she had to be content.

The primal matter of clothes having been

settled, Sonia found her mind free to enjoy London. Dorothy saw to it that she had her fill of the gayeties of society, and her striking and uncommon beauty and charming manners made her no little of a success. Gabriel took no great pleasure in the admiration she excited, though it was far from lessening her value in his eyes.

But Sonia did not enjoy only the pleasures of society, the dances, dinners, theaters, concerts, picture-galleries; since her father had been a liberal, she had been educated carefully in all matters English and had a considerable curiosity about historical London. This gave Gabriel his chance. He professed, and indeed had, the same curiosity, and they became companions in its gratification. Sometimes Tinker went with them; but for the most part they pursued their researches unencumbered by the presence of a third person. At first Sonia had questioned the propriety of this; but Dorothy assured her that in England and America the Continental restrictions on the intercourse of young men and maidens did not prevail, and she might avail herself of the escort of Gabriel with an easy mind.

It is not to be wondered at that at the end

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of ten days of this untrammelled companionship Gabriel was more deeply in love with her than ever. He found that she possessed to an extraordinary degree the charm of variety. He never knew whether he would find her at the height of a brilliant lightness of spirit, or in the depths of the Slavonic melancholy which seemed ever to lower, a black cloud, in the background of her nature. And he never knew, if she were in high spirits, how soon she would fall into her gloom, or, if she were gloomy, how soon she would rise to sparkling brightness. With an utter simplicity she never strove to hide or change the mood in which she happened to be; and he often found himself longing to drive away for good and all the gloom which so often oppressed her. He was kept always in a wholesome doubt whether that would ever be his privilege; for she showed herself no less changeable in her attitude to himself. On some days she would be entirely sympathetic, the frankest and most delightful of comrades; on others she would drive him to distraction by a willful aloofness, in which he could do nothing to please her, in which they seemed to have nothing in common. Now and again, too, some phrase of the old money-worship in which he

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had been brought up, would, in spite of his practical rejection of it, slip from his tongue; then he cowered under the outburst of her scorn.

Having been so lately short of it, she showed no contempt, indeed, for money itself. Her scorn was for the temperament which could regard money as an end in itself, which could set furiously about acquiring it without a very definite desire to put it to some good use.

He found that the best way of drawing her from her moods of aloofness, or scorn, or gloom was to begin to talk to her about Russia. She never failed to respond to the stimulus and become her more charming self, full of enthusiasm and devotion. But, whatever her mood, Russia was the chief theme of their talk.

Everyone had been observing the progress of their growing attraction for one another with entire content, when suddenly it became plain that they had had a serious quarrel. Sonia assumed an attitude of unapproachable haughtiness towards Gabriel; Gabriel went about the world glum, miserable, and aggrieved. Tinker and Dorothy and Sir Tancred supposed it to be an ordinary lover's quarrel which would be made up at the end of twenty-four hours, and followed by a closer union of the parties to it.

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But when at the end of a week Sonia had grown utterly glacial and Gabriel had assumed the air and manners of an ursine pessimist with a sore head, they realized that the matter was more serious. Thereupon Dorothy, shrinking from approaching Sonia on the delicate subject, begged Sir Tancred to find out from Gabriel the cause of the quarrel that they might compose it. Sir Tancred accepted the commission with languid reluctance.

But having accepted it with his usual languor, he executed it with his usual vigor, and that very night. Gabriel was dining with them and going on to a dance later in the evening. After Sonia and Dorothy had gone to the drawing-room, as soon as he had lighted his cigar, Sir Tancred said in a matter-of-course tone, "What's this quarrel between you and Miss Tresiatki?"

Gabriel glared at him with resentful eyes and said stiffly, "It's—it's surely my own business."

"Not altogether," said Sir Tancred. "You see Miss Tresiatki is my guest, right away from her people; and her business is very much my business, because I'm responsible for her."

Gabriel still glared at him; but he had been longing for days to unburden his soul to some sympathetic person, and Sir Tancred was a man

of experience and discernment. Therefore his eyes suddenly softened and he said, "Search me. I—I can't understand it. It just passes understanding. What happened was, I—I expressed my regard for her. I shouldn't have thought she could have missed seeing what my feelings were for a long time. But she flew out at me to beat the Dutch. She said I'd insulted her; and gave me to understand that I was all kinds of a despicable worm. I didn't know what I'd done; and I don't now. But, anyway, it was no sort of way to receive the proffer of an honest man's love." And once more his eyes grew angry.

Sir Tancred took his cigar out of his mouth, surveyed the ash lovingly, smiled, and said, "You told her you loved her?"

"Yes," growled Gabriel.

"Well, you did put your foot in it. In fact, you couldn't have put your foot in it worse," said Sir Tancred cheerfully.

"How? Why? The proffer of an honest man's love——"

"Yes, yes; that's all very well, and so on. But Miss Tresiatki has had a Continental upbringing; and she has very naturally taken her ideas on these matters from the two years at

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the French convent where she finished her education. In France, among the right people at any rate, it is the height of indelicacy for a young man to approach a young woman directly. Indeed, did he do so, his intentions would at once become suspect."

"But—but how could she think I meant to insult her? She ought—she couldn't help knowing me better than that!" cried Gabriel.

"One's high opinion of a person is frequently modified by their actions," said Sir Tancred dryly.

"But what am I to do?"

"There you have me. You've evidently shocked and affronted Miss Tresiatki deeply. In fact, having been used always to the American and English freedom of the young to arrange these matters themselves, you can't conceive how deeply," said Sir Tancred gravely.

"I must apologize and explain!" cried Gabriel, with a harried air.

"If she would listen to you, which is not at all likely, you'd probably make matters worse. You see, it's a bit difficult to explain exactly how she went wrong in believing you meant to insult her."

"Well, what am I to do? I *must* have the

thing straightened out! It—it—is so important to me!”

Sir Tancred considered the matter carefully for two or three minutes; then he said, “Well, really, on the whole I think the best thing we can do is to put the matter into the hands of Tinker.”

“Of Tinker?” cried Gabriel.

“You don’t seem to have grasped Tinker’s qualities,” said Sir Tancred, with a faint twinkle in his eye. “You see his brain is not clothed with experiences like ours; and he goes to the heart of a delicate matter with a kind of intuition which leaves us a long way behind. Besides, he’s the matchmaker of the family. He made the match between Dorothy and myself, you know.”

“Oh?” said Gabriel, somewhat distrustfully.

“Yes; I don’t think that you can do better than seek the mediation of Tinker. He seems to me much the most likely person to straighten things out; and, anyway, he won’t make them worse. Yes; you’d better put yourself in Tinker’s hands; or rather I’ll talk to Tinker about it. Come on, let’s go to the ladies.” And giving him no time to raise objections, he hurried Gabriel up to the drawing-room.

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Sonia refused with cold firmness to dance with Gabriel that night; and he mooned gloomily about the ballroom and the house, cursing his stars. He scarcely gave a thought to the intervention of Tinker; he ascribed Sir Tancred's expectations to a father's fond partiality, foreign as that quality seemed to Sir Tancred's nature.

As he rose from the breakfast table next morning, Sir Tancred said, "I want you for a few minutes, Tinker."

Tinker followed his father to the smoking-room, with an easy mind, since he had performed no exploit lately which should bring down upon him the paternal wrath.

Sir Tancred lighted a cigar, and said, "I want to speak to you about Miss Tresiatki. It seems to me that you're responsible for her chiefly, though as she's my guest I'm responsible too. Now, it won't do for her to start this revolutionary business again. She's a great deal too good-looking for it for one thing; and I don't believe her heart is really in it."

"Oh, yes; it is. Only she hasn't been thinking about it so much lately, I think," said Tinker quickly.

"You'll find she will begin thinking about it again, and soon," said Sir Tancred.

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"I suppose—if this row between her and Gabriel goes on, she will," said Tinker slowly. "I hadn't thought of that."

"Well, it had better be stopped. She's a great deal too good for a Russian prison. It seems to me it's your duty, as the person really responsible for her, to see that she get's married."

Tinker was watching his father with limpid, earnest eyes very closely, trying to discover what exactly was expected from him. Sir Tancred seemed to have said all that he had to say, and to be devoting himself entirely to the enjoyment of his cigar.

"I expected that Gabriel would have settled the thing by now," Tinker said presently, in a rather aggrieved tone.

"It looks rather as though the thing had settled Gabriel," said Sir Tancred lightly. "At any rate, he ought to be years recovering from his present attack of the blues. But, after all, how could he settle the thing? On the Continent the principals never settle it between themselves. It is always settled by their relatives, or guardians."

"It's a pity that Sonia's an orphan," said Tinker.

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"It is," said Sir Tancred. "On occasions of this kind one misses one's parents—if, that is, one has been brought up in the French fashions and has no say in the matter of one's marriage."

Tinker knitted his brow, put his hands in his pockets, went to the window, and stared down into the square.

Sir Tancred smiled and watched him for a while; then he said, "Well, you see how it is; you're the responsible person, and with Elsie away and not needing looking after, you've plenty of time on your hands; and so you can spend it on getting Sonia married."

"All right, sir," said Tinker, with quiet acceptance of the task; and he continued to stare out of the window.

Sir Tancred had nearly finished his cigar before Tinker turned from the window and said firmly, "I think the way to begin is by adopting Sonia."

"Eh? Oh, adopting Sonia? In what—what capacity would you adopt her," said Sir Tancred quickly.

"I should adopt her as a daughter. It's simplest for arranging marriages," said Tinker, with simple decision.

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"It—it—certainly is," said Sir Tancred a little blankly. "But—er—wouldn't the question of age come in?"

"I can't bother about that. Besides, really, I'm ever so much older than Sonia. I've seen so much more. And I don't suppose she'll mind."

Sir Tancred laughed softly and said, "Well, you certainly have a knack of adopting pretty people—first there was Elsie and now Sonia."

"It's rather an extra advantage for them to be pretty, I think," said Tinker thoughtfully.

"You will find many people disagree with you," said Sir Tancred. "The possession of beautiful relations is apt to prove rather a worry. But for my part, if I am to have a grand-daughter, I prefer her beautiful."

"Oh, I never thought of that!" said Tinker quickly, his face clouding a little. "I hope you don't mind, sir."

"Not at all—not at all," said Sir Tancred quickly. "I have grown used to your generally successful efforts to put me in the position of a patriarch. Remember the tribe with which I came out of the Böhmerwald. I feel sure that one of these days I shall grow to like it—quite sure."

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Tinker grinned, and going to the door, opened it, and said, "Well, I'll go and find Sonia, and talk to her about it."

Since the indiscretion of Gabriel, the excursions to the historic but distant parts of London had come to an end; and he found Sonia in Dorothy's boudoir, at the writing-table. She wore a melancholy air, and greeted his entry with a faint, almost indifferent smile.

"Let's go out into the Park, or Kensington Gardens," he said cheerfully.

Sonia shook her head, and said in a gloomy voice, "No: I have already wasted too much time. I have just written to the Friends of Freedom, telling them that I'm ready to take up the work again. And I've written to my steward telling him to make arrangements to send my money to London. It is easier to send money from Russia to London and then from London to Russia than it is to send it from one part of Russia to another. It is more likely to come safely. And I do not know in what part of Russia my work will be."

Tinker thought for a moment before he spoke. Then he said, "Then it's a good idea to have it sent to London first."

Sonia was taken a little aback; she had ex-

pected him to oppose vehemently her design to return to conspiring. But the wide experience of women which Tinker had enjoyed during the pre-nuptial wanderings of Sir Tancred—many women had naturally made or tried to make a pet of such an angel child—had inspired into him a precocious distrust of the value of opposition to womanly whims.

Disappointed, then, by his careless acquiescence, she said, "Yes; it is the best way. Then you only deal with foreign bankers. They do not steal."

"I should have thought it would be more sensible, if you have money, enough money that is, to give it—more useful than plotting yourself," said Tinker, with a great air of common sense.

"Of course I have money—I have my rents," said Sonia a little impatiently. "But it is not enough to give. I want to work myself—to help the cause with my own efforts. It is not enough to give. I must go back to Russia."

"But will the police give you the chance? Won't they collar you at once?" said Tinker doubtfully.

"I must risk it. I can hide," said Sonia quickly.

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"Yes; of course you can. But I should have thought it would be better to stop over here for a time—till they'd forgotten you a bit, don't you know?" said Tinker, with a very good air of detachment. So saying he seemed ready to let the subject drop, went to the bookcase and began to set the books straight in it.

Sonia was a little hurt by his show of indifference. She turned to the addressed letters, looked at them listlessly, and sighed. Presently she sighed again.

By the time she breathed the second sigh Tinker had arranged the books with a neatness to satisfy the most meticulous eye; then he said with some irrelevance, "Don't you rather wish you had a parent?"

"My father died seven years ago; and I was never much with him. He was most of the time away at Petersburg. Sometimes I did not see him for months—oh, many months," said Sonia listlessly.

"Still you must miss not having a father," said Tinker carelessly, stooping down to push a book the eighth of an inch further into a shelf.

Sonia thought a while; then she said, "Yes; I think I do."

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"It's difficult for a girl to get married if she hasn't a parent to arrange things," said Tinker, turning round and looking at her with extremely limpid eyes.

"I don't want to get married?" cried Sonia flushing.

"No: of course not. But if you did, a father would be useful. Wouldn't he? And he'd look after you generally, too," said Tinker.

Sonia said nothing. She seemed to be considering something—the marriage question perhaps—with a frowning face.

"Wouldn't a father be useful?" Tinker persisted.

"Yes, oh, yes," said Sonia impatiently.

"That's what I've been thinking; a father would be useful to you. And since I'm rather responsible for you—at least my father is always saying so—I think it would make things simpler if I adopted you, don't you know?"

"Adopted me?" cried Sonia, awaking to the liveliest attention.

"Yes; adopted you as my daughter," said Tinker firmly.

"Me! You!" cried Sonia. The cloud cleared quickly from her face. She smiled, and then she laughed.

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"Is it not that you are too young for the parental position?" she said, still laughing.

"Well, you want a father of some kind, and I'm handy. Besides, after all, I'm really older than you are, a good deal, don't you know? I've been about and mixed with different people so much more. It ages one," said Tinker, with a sudden air of the serious gravity of one on whom the cares of the world are indeed a burden.

"Yes, yes; you are a decrepit one. I have observed it many times," said Sonia. "It—it would be rather amusing."

"I expect you'd like it," said Tinker, with a seraphic smile, thinking of the use he meant to make of his parental authority.

"Oh, yes; I am sure I should. So I accept. I will be your affectionate and obedient daughter, little papa," said Sonia; and rising she swept a deep courtesy.

"That's all right. That's settled," said Tinker; and he laughed too. But his was the laugh of the one who wins.

"Is it not proper that I should begin by kissing my little papa?" said Sonia mischievously. She had had occasion to observe his extreme aversion from being kissed.

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"No: certainly not," said Tinker at once all gravity. "You—you may kiss me at night—when I go to bed—that's plenty."

"Oh, what a cold little papa!"

Tinker walked across the room and took up the two letters: "About these now," he said in a tone of great firmness. "I'll post this letter to your steward, because it's always a good thing to have money. But this letter to the revolutionist people I'll hold over for a bit, till we've talked it over." And he put it in his pocket.

"Oh!" said Sonia a little blankly. Then her face cleared, and she added, "Of course the little papa must be obeyed."

"Rather," said Tinker. "And now go and put your hat on, and we'll go up to Buzzard's and have some ices."

He opened the door; and as he followed her out he smiled the smile of a truly Machiavelian seraph and closed one sunny blue eye.

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## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### TINKER PROVES A DETERMINED PARENT

**T**INKER displayed no little of the air of a proprietor on his walk to Buzzard's with Sonia. It did not escape her; she was a little impressed as well as amused by it. At lunch he informed Sir Tancred and Dorothy of the new relationship; and when they had finished chaffing him about the difficulty of discharging a parent's duties, and chaffing Sonia about displaying the difficult obedience of a daughter, Tinker said, "Of course she'll have to call you grandpapa, sir; and you grandmama, Dorothy."

Dorothy and Sir Tancred looked at one another somewhat ruefully; and Dorothy said, "We shall hear about this from people."

When Tinker in the course of bidding them good-night that evening came to Sonia, remembering her filial privilege, she bent forward to kiss him.

But he started back, and cried in a tone of

horror, "That isn't the proper way at all! You mustn't kiss *me*. It—it isn't respectful. You stretch out your forehead; and I—what d'you call it—I imprint a kiss on it. That is the way fathers kiss their daughters—among the right kind of people. I've seen it in France—often."

"Always the passion for exactitude," murmured Sir Tancred.

Sonia laughed and presented her forehead; and Tinker, somewhat gingerly, imprinted the paternal kiss on it. Gabriel, who was dining with them, observed him with a positive scowl of envy and contempt: this pedantry in osculation, where Sonia was concerned, passed his understanding. But Tinker went up to bed quite contented; he felt that if there must be kissing, he had found the pleasantest way of getting through it.

For the next few days he went about the world with the air of thoughtful determination of one whose mind runs on the accomplishing of an important matter; a man might rule a province with a less serious gravity. But he made no great use of his parental authority. Twice, indeed, finding Sonia in a fit of gloom, grieving over her disappointment in Gabriel, he com-

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manded her to accompany him at once on a walk in the Park; and once he rebuked her in carefully considered words for treating Gabriel, her grandpapa's guest, with such coldness and severity.

The rebuke drew from her an outburst which amused him—it was not often that the burning wrath of his fellows, when he had himself provoked it, did not amuse him. But he kept his face grave, and said:

"Well, all the same you ought not to be rough on anyone with the perpetual hump like Gabriel, don't you know?"

"The—the perpetual hump? What is that?" said Sonia.

"Being always miserable," said Tinker.

Sonia tossed her head, and holding it very high, marched out of the room, muttering some words to the effect that any misery Mr. Arnott might be suffering was without doubt his own fault and richly deserved. Then she went up to her room and wept over the general unsatisfactoriness of the miserable and wicked world.

Tinker smiled after her departing figure a smile of deep understanding. Then he went to the window and began to watch the square. Presently his eyes brightened at the sight of

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Gabriel. Not, indeed, that Gabriel was a sight to brighten the eyes, for he was literally slouching along in the most melancholy fashion, his face set in a funereal gloom. It was quite useless his coming to the Beauleigh house; and well he knew it. But the conviction was powerless to keep him away from it. Tinker watched him with a brooding smile. At the door Gabriel stopped and gazed moodily around. Then he gave himself a shake, drew himself erect and walked briskly away. Tinker's eyes opened wide in surprise. At the end of fifty yards Gabriel's brisk feet began to lag. They moved slower and slower; he turned and came back at the gloomy, slow slouch. Tinker beamed upon him.

Presently Gabriel was ushered into the room. He greeted Tinker gloomily, and with equal gloom stated that he had come to take Dorothy out.

"That's all right," said Tinker. "I thought perhaps you had come to take Sonia out, and I couldn't allow that."

"What? Why not?" said Gabriel loudly, all his gloom dissipated in astonishment.

"Oh, it was all right when she was independent, don't you know?" said Tinker glibly.

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"But now I've adopted her, it's quite different. I'm responsible for her; and I shouldn't think of letting her go about with you."

"Well, I'm—I'll be——" said Gabriel breathlessly.

"Of course it would be different if you were engaged to her, or were really in earnest," said Tinker, with the same glib suavity.

"Not in earnest? What do you mean?" roared Gabriel, advancing on him with manifestly warlike intentions.

Tinker skipped behind a table with a lithe quickness he could not hope to emulate. Gabriel therefore stayed on the other side of the table, drumming on it and grinding his teeth in a very heated way:

"What do you mean?" he said again ferociously.

"Well, I've been her adopted father for three days; and if you'd been really in earnest, you'd have come to me before now and started arranging things," said Tinker, with some severity.

"Arranging things? With you?" cried Gabriel in the same loud voice; and then a glimmer of light came to him and he added more gently, "Oh, ah, yes; you mean I should have come

to you and asked permission to marry your—your daughter?”

“Yes, of course. Only you Americans never hustle about things that are really important,” said Tinker, with some contempt.

“That’s the Continental fashion. We don’t do it that way in the States—nor do you in England,” Gabriel objected.

“It’s the only proper fashion, really. Besides, Sonia is used to that fashion.”

Gabriel hesitated, considering whether Tinker could really help him, or whether his intervention would only make matters worse. It seemed to him that matters could not be worse, so that Tinker could not at any rate do any harm.

“Well, are you in earnest? Do you want to marry Sonia?” said Tinker impatiently.

“Of course I do!”

“Then all we’ve got to do is to arrange it,” said Tinker, with his best air of a man of the world.

“That—that sounds fine. But suppose Sonia won’t come into the scheme?” said Gabriel, with a distinct lack of hopefulness.

“We needn’t bother about that. Sonia will do as I tell her. What’s the good of my adopt-

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ing her, if she doesn't? Now what settlements do you propose to make?" said Tinker, with the most business-like air.

"Settlements? I shall set to work at once to make a home for her," said Gabriel, with brave earnestness.

"How long would that take," said Tinker, frowning.

"A year or two—say two."

"But that's rather rot. What's the good of letting it drag on like that? And what's the good of your being the son of a millionaire, if you have to go and work for a home? You ought to have an allowance big enough to get married on at once."

"My father wouldn't see it," said Gabriel.

"Why, what does he do with his extra money?"

"Makes more," said Gabriel.

"But look here, that's all rot. He ought to give you a decent allowance, or make you a partner or something. You haven't got any brothers or sisters."

"I should like an allowance," said Gabriel frankly. "I've been thinking a lot about this Russian business; and I've talked a lot to Sonia about it. I have a notion that there's a lot to

be done for Russian freedom by a man with some money behind him; and I could do it. And I want to do it; and Sonia would help."

"Then you'll have to make your father fork out. But after all, this is the sort of thing you and Sonia can settle between yourselves. All I've got to do is to arrange her marriage. Then I'm not responsible any more," said Tinker cheerfully.

"You arrange that; and I'll get the money somehow, you bet. And if you can fix it up—I—I shan't know how to thank you," said Gabriel, with fervor.

"I'll fix it up all right," said Tinker quietly. "What's the good of my being her adopted father, if she doesn't do as I tell her?"

"I hope she'll see it in that light," said Gabriel.

"I'll see that she does," said Tinker, with serene confidence; and he thought a moment, then added, "You come round at five to-morrow afternoon; and I'll introduce you to her properly as the man she's going to marry. You can think out how you will work it."

"I fancy, with a little leverage like that, I could work it," said Gabriel hopefully.

"That's all right," said Tinker cheerfully.

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He sprung his surprise on Sonia that very afternoon. She met him hurrying down the stairs with an air of the most business-like haste, and asked him where he was going, and if he had forgotten that he had invited her to take tea with him at the Carlton.

"I hadn't forgotten. I'll get back in time. I'm awfully busy arranging your marriage," he said quickly.

"What?" cried Sonia.

"It's all right. I'll tell you all about it as soon as it's quite settled," he said, hurrying on down the stairs.

"What do you mean? Stop!" cried Sonia.

But Tinker only cried from the hall, "It's all right. You'll like him. He's not so very old. He'll make you an excellent husband." And the house door banged behind him.

Sonia gasped; lost her listlessness; raced upstairs to the drawing-room. She burst in on Dorothy with a face of consternation, and cried, "What is this? What is it that Tinker does? Arranging my marriage?"

"Is that all? You quite startled me. I thought it was something serious," said Dorothy, who had received her cue from Sir Tancred.

"But my marriage! Is it not serious?" cried Sonia.

"So that's what Tinker has been so busy about. I wondered what it was," said Dorothy, in the most matter-of-fact tone, as if it was the most natural occupation in the world for her stepson.

"But it is unheard of! Absurd! I do not want anyone to arrange a marriage for me!" cried Sonia, her pretty flushed face working with wrath and horror.

"Tinker has such excellent judgment," said Dorothy.

Sonia gasped, and cried, "But I do not want any marriage!"

"But, surely you've been brought up to understand that fathers arrange these matters; and you've let Tinker adopt you. Of course he must arrange your marriage; and you must obey him," said Dorothy, keeping a very firm control of her features.

"But I never thought! It was a *blague!*" cried Sonia.

"Why, he told me you promised to obey him!" said Dorothy.

"But not like this! I was joking!"

"Oh, well, naturally you're a little startled

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at the first thought of such a thing," said Dorothy, in an indulgent tone. "But you can leave it all to Tinker. He has such an excellent judgment. Whom has he chosen for your husband?"

"He shan't! I won't! It is absurd!" cried Sonia.

"Well, well, settle it with Tinker. He's the responsible person. You see he has taken entire charge of you," said Dorothy carelessly.

"I will not have it! I will tell him he shall not do such things! It is an impertinence!" cried Sonia.

"Be careful of his feelings. Do not hurt them. He thinks he is acting for the best, I am sure. Whom has he selected for your husband?"

"I do not know! I do not care! I will not have anything to do with him—not anything!"

"Oh, you'd better see him first. You might like him," said Dorothy in her kindest voice. "Tinker has such excellent judgment."

"Sap-er-li-popette!" said Sonia through her clenched teeth; and she left the room with some vigor.

Dorothy laughed softly and long. She fancied that the thought of being married to some-

one else would bring home to Sonia the desirability of Gabriel in a somewhat emphatic manner.

Impatience is hardly the word to express the lively eagerness with which Sonia awaited the return of Tinker. She fell upon him in the hall with the pregnant question, "What is it you have been doing? Explain it to me! Now! At once!"

"Do you know it's a quarter to five and you haven't got your hat on?" said Tinker sternly.

"I will not come out of the house—no—not till you have told me," said Sonia firmly.

"Now, that isn't the way to talk to an adopted father," said Tinker severely. "We can talk about your marriage at tea. There's no hurry. You're not going to be married for two or three weeks. Go and put your hat on at once."

"No: tell me about it now! At once!"

"Not a bit of it. I'm going to tell you all I mean to tell you at tea at the Carlton. You won't get a word out of me now. I'm not going to encourage disobedience," said Tinker.

Sonia protested and tried to argue the point. Tinker was obdurate. He confined his share in the discussion to the words, "Go and put your

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hat on." In the end, fuming and exasperated, Sonia went and put her hat on. The process gave Tinker time to set his ideas in order; and all the way in the cab he read her a severe lecture on obedience as the first necessity in a daughter.

The moment they had settled down at their table and Tinker had ordered their tea, Sonia said mutinously, "I am not your adopted daughter any more! I am satisfied with enough of it."

Tinker shook his head and said, "I'm afraid that won't do, don't you know? It's because I'm your adopted father that I've been making these arrangements. And you can't go and get out of it just when they're made."

"But I did not ask you to make arrangements!"

"Of course not. Daughters don't."

"But you ought to have told me what it was you did," Sonia protested.

"Fathers don't tell their daughters," said Tinker, still firm on the unshakable basis of precedent.

The coming of the waiter with their tea created a diversion. Tinker poured it out, declaring that Sonia was too excited to discharge the function properly. He diverted her atten-

tion from her grievance during tea by a careful discussion of the probable habits, customs, and occupations of the people at the tables round them.

Then when they had finished their tea and strawberries and cream, he came back to the subject, saying, "It's really an awfully good marriage I've arranged for you—at least I think it will be awfully good."

"How you do return! I do not want any marriage!" cried Sonia.

"He's a very decent sort, and not so very old," said Tinker patiently.

"I do not want him!"

"But how can you tell till you've seen him? You might change your mind altogether. You might like him awfully."

"Oh!" cried Sonia, at the end of her patience, "It is all foolish altogether! I will not see him! I do not want him!"

"But you'll have to see him. I made an appointment with him to introduce him properly to you to-morrow afternoon at five."

Sonia shook her head.

"Now, whatever harm is there in seeing him? It—it doesn't mean that you'll have to marry him."

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"I do not trust you. You do so persevere," said Sonia.

"Well, look here: if you don't like him, I won't make you marry him," said Tinker, with an air splendidly generous. "But you'll really have to see him and give him a chance. It'll look so foolish if you don't, after all the arrangements are made. Besides, it would be so uncivil. Why, it would be insulting."

Sonia once more refused. But Tinker with an infinite gentle firmness returned again and again to the charge till at last he wore down her resistance and dragged from her a grudging consent to see the husband of his choice. Then with the greatest ingratitude he refused to gratify her natural curiosity about him, though by saying several times, "He's not so very old," he succeeded in producing the impression that he was a man of some fifty odd summers, and prevented her from supposing for a moment that she had been rejecting with this resolute firmness the indelicate but noble-hearted Gabriel.

The suggestion that she should marry someone else very naturally set her indulging herself in the somewhat tearful luxury of considering how happy she would have been were it Gabriel who was to present himself on the mor-

row in due form as a suitor. She was the more annoyed to find, at dinner that night and at breakfast next morning, that both Sir Tancred and Dorothy took it as a matter of course that she would marry the husband Tinker had chosen. Indeed, she found their certainty on this point so wearing, that a little while before lunch she took Tinker aside, and said a few burning words to him about it.

He only said, with undimmed cheerfulness, "Oh, well, you never know, don't you know?"

Sonia told him with some heat that she did.

She was not only annoyed by this fixed idea by which everyone seemed obsessed, but she was also disquieted by the fact that Gabriel had not been to the house for twenty-four hours. It set her to wondering with a sinking heart if her adopted but diabolically officious little papa had informed him of the arrangement he had made for her future, and had driven him away.

What with one thing and another she went to the drawing-room to have the husband of Tinker's choice presented to her, with much less listlessness than she would have shown a day or two before. She was not only prepared to accord to him a coldness unknown in the United Kingdom since the glacial period, but to show

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herself actively disagreeable should an opportunity arise.

Accordingly she sailed into the room with her head held very high, her eyes two shining danger signals, her nostrils dilated a little for the fray, stopped short at the sight of Gabriel, flushed scarlet, and said, "Oh!"

With an unsmiling face, profoundly serious eyes, and a glibness born of careful rehearsal, Tinker said, "Mr. Gabriel Arnott, my adopted daughter, Miss Sonia Tresiatki. Mr. Arnott has done himself and us the honor of proposing for your hand in marriage. You'll be a bit shy with one another at first, so I'll give you plenty of time to get over it."

In a breath he had slipped past Sonia, and was out of the room; the door banged to; the key turned in the lock and was withdrawn; and there came from the hall muffled sounds as of shrieks.

"You? You? How dare you?" said Sonia in a voice hushed with anger.

"There—I said you'd be mad," said Gabriel plaintively.

"That devilish little boy!" said Sonia, naturally and beyond measure infuriated by the realization of the vision of Gabriel as *prétendu*,

over the impossibility of which she had wept so bitterly.

"Oh, Tinker's a very decent sort," said Gabriel.

"That's what he said about you," said Sonia, with fathomless scorn.

"Well, I am—at least I try to be," said Gabriel.

"And you plot with a little boy to trap me so that I cannot escape from you, and persecute me!" cried Sonia.

"Oh, no! I didn't. I didn't know the young limb was going to lock us in. I wouldn't have let him—I wouldn't really. All I expected was that, as your adopted father, he would present me to you in the formal, continental way as a suitor for your hand. That's all—I give you my word," Gabriel protested earnestly.

Sonia sat down on the sofa, panting a little from the violence of her sudden wrath.

"You see it was the only thing to do," Gabriel continued. "You were so angry with me when I spoke for myself without going through the formalities that I had to give the formalities a chance."

"Do not speak to me!" said Sonia fiercely. Gabriel ceased to speak to her. He showed

his good sense by going to the window, and giving her time to recover from the shock, while he made a careful and exhaustive examination of Berkeley Square.

For seven or eight minutes he did not stir. Sonia had time to grow cool, to recover her self-possession, and to impress on her memory most of the important points of the view of his broad back. In a relenting mood she began to picture to herself the gloomy, unhappy face on the other side of it, when of a sudden he began to hum softly one of the blithe breakdowns of his native land. She gasped with indignation.

Then he turned, actually smiling, and said, "Look here, little girl, let's discuss this matter in the common-sense continental way you've been brought up to. Let's consider it as a cold business proposition."

"Do not speak to me," said Sonia in a far more peaceable tone.

"But why shouldn't we marry? What have you got against me?" said Gabriel.

Sonia said nothing.

Gabriel came to the sofa and sat down beside her. She drew herself away from him, but neither far nor vigorously.

"We got on so well together before I—I

spoke to you about it without going through the formalities. We were such friends," said Gabriel in a tone of very unbusiness-like softness.

Sonia said nothing; but a faint flush mantled her pale cheeks.

Gabriel took her hand. Her effort to withdraw it was not of such a decision as justified him in releasing it, and he held on. But the touch of it caused him to lose his business grip of the matter, and he began to protest his fondness for her and the pain their breach had caused him in words and accents the most unbusiness-like. The only business-like part of his impassioned protestations was their occasional lack of truthfulness, as when he assured her that she was the only girl for whom his pulse had ever quickened a single beat. His experience was not so limited. In the middle his other arm slipped from the back of the sofa round her waist; and he was so carried away by his own eloquence that he was presently holding her to him quite tightly. Sonia also seemed carried away by it, for she did not resist or raise any protest—not even when he kissed her.

They were still, an hour later, so absorbed in the discussion of this cold business proposition that Tinker, though he made much unnec-

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essary noise about it, had almost got the door open before they had reached the opposite ends of the sofa.

Tinker looked upon them with unsmiling gravity and said, "Well, have you settled anything?"

Sonia was too busy blushing to reply; but Gabriel said somewhat incoherently, "Oh—ah—yes. A business proposition is a—oh, yes—fixed it up very nicely, thank you."

"That's all right," said Tinker going out and shutting the door after him very carefully.

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## CHAPTER TWELVE

### THE BITERS NEARLY BIT

GABRIEL looked to find Tinker going about the world for the next few days with the air of a hero who has performed a splendid deed and is trying to look a good deal more modest than he feels. He was the more surprised to find that that angel child seemed to think but little of having brought him and Sonia together, that he plainly regarded the adoption and marrying off of daughters as operations which fell well within the sphere of the small boy. He received Gabriel's thanks with a patient politeness; and with the careful gentleness of one fearing to hurt her feelings and wishing strongly not to, he suggested to Sonia that now that she had no longer any occasion for a father, they might very well drop the relationship and with it his practice of imprinting a kiss on her brow before he went to bed at night.

A few days later, leaving them in the bliss of love's young dream, he made the journey to



Passau to bring back the now uninfected Elsie. On their return to England the two children went straight to Beauleigh Court, since London in the summer is no place for a delicate child. They found that their young friend, and neighbor, Lady Grandison, known to her familiars as Noggs, was at home at Stonorill Castle, the country seat of her uncle, the Prime Minister; and the three of them together, as outlaws, Indians, brigands, pirates, or what not, brightened not only their own lives, but the lives of those round them in different ingenious but exasperating ways.

Among those who enjoyed, or did not enjoy, this brightening process, was their neighbor, Colonel Stiffgate of Stiffgate. He was a forcibly retired officer, with far too much spare time on his hands, which he devoted to general interference. He had interfered with the harmless wandering propensities of the Lady Noggs by forbidding her to ramble over his estate; and he had done his best to eradicate Tinker's and Elsie's bad habit of driving a motor car.

In the matter of mortoring Tinker did not hold with the law of England, which forbids to children the diversion of driving a motor car. He knew himself to be a far more skillful

and cool-headed driver than half the motorists in England, and he saw no good and sufficient reason why he should not exercise the talent. Both he and Elsie had been used to drive a car round about Beauleigh, and the village policemen had winked at the practice till Colonel Stiffgate learned of it, and used all his magisterial authority, and even greater power of vituperation, to bring them to a more active discharge of their duties, with the result that Sir Tancred had been fined twice for allowing Tinker to drive a car.

Now, much to his disgust, Tinker was only allowed to use his car when accompanied by a chauffeur, a restriction which hampered considerably his efforts to brighten the lives of those who lived round him. Colonel Stiffgate paid, indeed, for his interference; one winter's night Tinker had brought him out into the snow by firing off twenty cartridges on the edge of the covert which runs to within fifty yards of Stiffgate Hall; he had on several occasions when they chanced to meet brought him well into the borderland of apoplexy by insisting on discussing with him the exploits which led to his hasty recall from the Transvaal; and was generally believed to have pinned the bright in-

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genious tail which one market day so relieved the monotony of the ordinary chaffering, on to the Colonel's coat.

However, the lasting advantage lay with the Colonel, since neither Tinker nor Elsie might use the car unless it was driven by their chauffeur, Adophe Roche, a Swiss who did not possess the legendary merriment of his nation to a degree which enabled him to sit waiting in the car for two or three hours at a stretch, while they were engaged in some patient and protracted effort to brighten the lives of those around them.

But one morning Tinker felt bound to use the car without this accompaniment. News came that a tiger had escaped from Pinkerton's circus, which had exhibited itself the night before at Warlesden; and in spite of all the efforts of the keepers to find and trap it, the brute was still at large. It took very little time for Tinker to choose one of his father's sporting rifles and assure himself that it was in perfect order. By the time he had done it the car had been brought round. He was delayed for a while by Elsie, who claimed, with a firmness she had learned from him, the right to share his new sport, and showed herself uncommonly impervious to his

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explanation that the only known connection between tigers and little girls was of a dietetic nature. However, at last he convinced her that she was not going with him, came out, told Adolphe on what errand they were bent, and that on such an expedition a motor car became naturally an elephant and its chauffeur a mahout.

On the instant Adolphe developed an amazing and violent repugnance to sport. He explained with purple face and the liveliest gestures that he was paid seventy francs a week to drive motor cars, not to hunt tigers, and that nothing on earth should induce him to attempt anything so bloodthirsty.

"All right. I'll drive the car and do the shooting, too," said Tinker, getting into it.

"No, no!" cried Elsie, swift to seize her chance. "You must have a mahout! No one ever goes tiger-hunting on an elephant without a mahout! I'll drive the car. How can a tiger possibly get near me, if you have that rifle?"

The truth of her statement about the necessity of a mahout aroused Tinker's passion for exactitude.

"All right. I suppose you'll have to," he said gloomily; and Elsie stepped into the car and took the steering-wheel.

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Adolphe cried something about fetching the butler to stop this fool-hardiness and dashed into the house. At once Elsie started the car and they ran through the park.

As they came out of the gates, she said, "I'd better run down to the bottom of Stonorill wood. We promised to meet Noggs there."

"I'd forgotten all about that! We'd better go there hard. If she's out alone in the woods, it's dangerous. There's no saying where the tiger is. He might catch her," said Tinker anxiously.

The car buzzed along the lanes and through the leafy arcades of the overhanging woods, at times with no meticulous regard for the legal speed limit. Tinker sat alert, gripping the rifle, and scanning with keen eyes the meadows and woods on either side; the car took all Elsie's attention. In less than half an hour they reached the bottom of the Stonorill home woods and stopped at a gate on which was swinging a child of that dark and vivid beauty which Sir Joshua Reynolds so loved to paint.

As the car stopped she dropped from the gate with a catlike lightness, crying, "Hallo, Tinker! I thought you were never coming! Hallo, Elsie."

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"Hallo, Noggs. Have you heard about the tiger?" said Tinker.

"No: what tiger?"

"There's a tiger escaped from Pinkerton's circus over at Warlesden: and it's somewhere in the Beauleigh woods."

"They say it's a man-eater," said Elsie.

"We're going to hunt for it. Climb up on to the elephant," said Tinker.

The Lady Noggs looked at the motor car with a sudden uncertainty and distrust. "I thought it was a camel," she said doubtfully. "We've always considered it a camel—ever since you were Raisuli."

"But there weren't any tigers about then. You can't hunt tigers from a camel. It must be an elephant," said Tinker firmly. "Climb up!"

The Lady Noggs stepped into the car with puckered brow: she had all a peeress's dislike of radical changes.

Elsie was quick to perceive her uneasiness, and said quickly, in a reassuring tone, "It's all right. You have to change things to what you want them to be."

At this perfect explanation the face of the Lady Noggs cleared.

"Elsie's the mahout," said Tinker.

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"What shall I be?" said the Lady Noggs.

"You'll be one of the tiger-hunters; and we'll take it in turns to shoot the tiger; you can have the first shot, if you like," said the unselfish Tinker.

"No: I think I'd rather not—not with that gun."

"It does kick," said Tinker. "I can hold it fairly straight; but it always tries to kick my shoulder off."

"Then I'll look on," said the Lady Noggs.

"You can look out for the tiger, too; you've very good eyes," said Tinker.

After this settling of the parts in the enterprise, the car, under the guidance of Elsie and the direction of Tinker, began a slower, careful, and complete tour of the woods. For the most part it kept to the lanes; but now and again it left them when one of the wood-drives was smooth enough for its passage. If they thought they saw the tiger once, they thought they saw it several score times. One or the other of them saw it every seventy or eighty yards. Further examination generally established the fact that the supposed tiger was a distant red cow, or a patch of color in a hedgerow.

They met three gamekeepers at different

points; but none of them had seen the tiger. Indeed, all three first learned of its escape from the children; and the tidings seemed to add nothing to their happiness. In fact, as soon as they were enlightened, each of them took hastily a bee-line for his cottage. Unfortunately, too, they passed a policeman who promptly took out his notebook and made an entry.

Whenever the car passed a pond, Tinker got out and examined the mud round its edges for his quarry's spoor. They searched till evening with no abatement of their keenness, getting lunch and tea in villages. Their search was fruitless; they saw nothing of the tiger, and heard nothing of him from the villagers. If the tiger saw, or heard, as is quite likely, their buzzing elephant, it did not excite in him any desire to make its closer acquaintance. With a real elephant it would, doubtless, have been different; he would have felt more at home with it, and might have tried to let his teeth meet somewhere in its excessive bulk. Possibly he considered a mere mechanical substitute unworthy of that attention.

Towards evening they passed the lodges of Stonorill park, and the Lady Noggs left word that since the escaped tiger was lurking in the



neighborhood, she did not think it safe to go through the half mile of park to the castle, and would spend the night at Beauleigh. Having discharged this diplomatic duty to her anxious relatives, she stepped into the car again; and they set out cheerfully to Beauleigh Court. They thought it unlikely that she would be sent for, for an escaped tiger leads people to spend their evenings at home.

The children were very much the weary tiger-hunter that night; and Tinker regaled his two young friends on some mythical accounts of his exploits and dangers in the jungles of the far but tiger-haunted East, a region hitherto unblest by his presence. They awoke next morning keener than ever on hunting down the reputed man-eater; but it is difficult to say exactly what induced Tinker to roll up the big tiger-skin which was spread over a couch in the library, and carry it out to the car as they were starting on their hunt. Perhaps it was merely the association of ideas; perhaps it was his intelligent passion for variety; perhaps the practical vein in his nature rebelled at the unfruitfulness of their efforts of yesterday, and he was desirous that the day before them should not be wholly barren of incident.

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Adolphe's humanitarian scruples were still violent; and Elsie was again the mahout. After an hour's hunting they came to the cross-roads in the woods. By Tinker's direction Elsie drove the car into the wood itself, in among the trees. They got out of it and, Tinker bearing the tiger-skin, pushed their way through the under-wood, to a corner overlooking the cross-roads. It was an easy matter for the deft Tinker to arrange the skin on a framework of short sticks in the similitude of a standing tiger. The head had been stuffed on the skin, and with its bright glass eyes and well bared teeth, it presented, if anything, a more fearsome appearance than ever it had done in life. Among the bushes, through the veil of the scanty hedge, a wayfarer had need of very sharp eyes indeed to discover that he faced the mere simulacrum of the striped terror of the jungle.

The two little girls had watched Tinker construct his bogey with wondering curiosity, but in silence. When his handiwork was finished the Lady Noggs clapped her hands, and cried, "Oh, I see! What fun it will be!"

Elsie smiled with supreme satisfaction. If a grin could wrinkle a seraph's face, Tinker grinned.

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He lay down by the tiger so that by reaching out and shaking one of the sticks which supported it he could make the whole body waggle and seem alive. Elsie stretched herself out beside him; the Lady Noggs lay down beside Elsie; and peering down the road in front of them they waited.

For a while nothing happened, then they heard a faint sound of clumping footfalls, their eyes brightened, and they craned forward their heads to get the first view of the wayfarer. Presently there came toddling round the corner, sixty yards down the road, an old woman. Elsie, and the lady Noggs turned their heads and looked at one another doubtfully. Tinker said, "Oh, bother!" in a tone of the deepest disgust, pushed his way quickly to the car, and came back with a rug which he spread over the tiger. The old woman came slowly along, and toddled past unseeing and unterrified.

"Silly old woman!" the Lady Noggs murmured.

"If you don't want any particular kind of people, they always come messing round!" said Tinker grumpily; and he undraped the terror of the jungle.

They lay themselves down again, and waited,

now and again speculating as to who would be likely to come along and afford them entertainment. They did not have to wait so long this time; and then Morton, her uncle's gamekeeper and another enemy of the Lady Noggs, whom he had often accused of disturbing his pheasants from their nests, came round the corner. His alert trained eye took in the tiger twenty yards away. He stopped dead; his eyes opened wide and his mouth opened wide; his red leather cheeks turned a dusky brown; his teeth rattled; his cap rose on his head; and Tinker growled and moved his bogey. Morton made an effort to get his gun to his shoulder, his arm refused to lift it, it clinked on the ground, and Tinker growled again, louder. Morton turned and went. They heard the clatter of his boots for half a mile down the road. Never before had a single pair of boots got so much noise out of it.

The children laughed joyously, and the Lady Noggs laughed loudest. "I do like that!" she cried. "That'll teach him to be a pig."

"That road's done for," said Tinker, "He'll stop anyone coming from Beauleigh village."

The next wayfarers were two shock-headed, slouching village louts of seventeen, who came

along peering into the hedge for bird's nests. They were so intent upon their search, that they came right up to the tiger, and looked through the hedge full into its bright glass eyes before they were aware of it. With one accord they clutched one another and gasped as Tinker let off a very fair tiger's roar. They did not turn, but they went—yelling. As long as the woods resounded with their yells the children laughed, then Tinker said with no little content, "They've gone down the Beauleigh road, too. That still leaves us the other three." And they settled down again in their ambush.

But for all that they had chosen the most frequented spot on the roads through the woods, they had a long wait before they were again entertained. At last they heard the sound of wheels coming down the road from Warlesden. As it grew louder the Lady Noggs said in an ecstatic whisper, "It's Colonel Stiffgate!"

"Sure?" said Tinker.

"Yes: I know the sound of his dogcart," said the Lady Noggs. This somewhat out of the way knowledge had doubtless been gained while hiding from its driver.

The dogcart came jogging quietly round the corner, and the Lady Noggs cried softly,

"Roar, Tinker! Roar ever so loud!" And Tinker roared for all he was worth. The Colonel saw the tiger and all his reckless gallantry seemed to fly to his rich, red face, for it turned purple, as he stood up in the dogcart, and lashed his astonished horse. It dashed forward, and clattered headlong down the road, its driver swaying from side to side as he lashed away, his face screwed round at a grotesque angle over his shoulder as he stared back open-mouthed with starting eyes, towards the lurking-place of the terror of the jungle. The children screamed in an ecstasy of delight till the Colonel and his dogcart were a faint clatter in the distance. Then, as she wiped away the tears of joy, the Lady Noggs said, "Wasn't it splendid? Fancy catching Morton and Colonel Stiffgate the same morning!"

"It was lucky," said Tinker. "He was better than those two louts, even though they did yell so."

"They were funny," said the Lady Noggs. "But I didn't care so much about them. I—I—didn't know them. But Morton and Colonel Stiffgate are always annoying me."

"Well, we paid them out again that time," said Elsie.

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After another wait the far-away hoot of a motor car came to their ears.

"Why, it must be uncle! We must make uncle jump!" cried the Lady Noggs gleefully.

"Rather!" said Tinker, to whom the idea of making the Prime Minister jump was beyond words alluring. And they crouched down again.

It was some time before they heard the sustained throbbing of the motor, for the Prime Minister was driving slowly to get the full enjoyment of the woods; then the car came round the corner, and they saw that it held also Mr. William Borrodaile, formerly his private secretary, and now at Stonorill on a visit.

"Billy, too!" murmured the Lady Noggs, choking with joy; and Tinker roared his savagest.

The Prime Minister took one look at the tiger, and sat bolt upright, a thing his affectionate niece had never seen him do before: his habitual languor had vanished in a flash. The car butted forward like a suddenly agitated goat, bucketted down the road, and went round the corner with a whirr.

The children looked at one another with disappointed eyes.

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"Uncle wasn't half frightened," said his affectionate niece, with extreme discontent.

"He's pluckier than you'd think. But all the same, Noggs, I'll bet he was startled," said Tinker.

"He didn't show it, then," said the Lady Noggs grumpily.

"Never mind," said Elsie. "After all, he doesn't annoy you like Morton and Colonel Stiffgate."

"Doesn't he, though?" said the Lady Noggs. "Though of course he doesn't mean to, like they do," she added, with her scrupulous regard for fairness.

"I think we'd better be going," said Tinker. "Billy will be back as soon as he can get hold of a gun, and we shall get caught."

The Lady Noggs and Elsie rose and shook their frocks. Tinker dismantled his bogey, and threw the sticks into the bushes. They made their way through the underwood to the motor car. As they pushed through the last fringe of bushes and came into the drive, Tinker was saying, "I don't know when I've enjoyed myself so——" when a low growl froze the rest of the words on his tongue; and facing them on the further side of the drive stood the escaped tiger.

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They saw it almost at the same moment, stopped dead, and stared at it with fluttering breath; and the tiger stared at them. For twenty seconds there was an utter stillness. Then the tiger lashed at a fly with his tail, and half bared his teeth. It broke the spell which held the children paralyzed. The two little girls looked at Tinker; and then in one movement, each driven by the same thought, to sacrifice self and save the others, all three of them dashed at the tiger, the little girls screaming, Tinker shouting. The tiger, his alertness sapped by captivity, was so taken aback by the fluttering and noisy onslaught that they were almost on him before he could make up his mind what to do; then with a snarl he turned and raced up the drive.

The children stopped, gasping, and looked at one another with dazed, unbelieving eyes in white faces. Then the Lady Noggs sat down and began to sob loudly, and with a little gurgle Elsie tumbled to the ground in a senseless heap. Tinker dropped on his knees beside her, his coolness for once utterly lost, wringing his hands and calling to her. Then with a great effort he gathered his scattered wits and ran to the car for water. He came back with it, and dashed

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it into her face; she opened her eyes; and in his relief he kissed her. He could scarcely have found a better way of reviving her, for a faint pink stained the dead whiteness of her cheeks. He begged her to pull herself together, for the tiger might return; she did her best, but it was three or four minutes before with their help she could totter to the car. She lay back in it, looking frail indeed.

Tinker sent the car along at full speed. They had gone about two miles when they came upon an armed procession, headed by the Prime Minister and Mr. Borrodaile in their car, and ending in a light cart carrying a big cage in charge of two keepers from the menagerie. The Prime Minister and Mr. Borrodaile had been provided with shotguns; the two farmers on horseback, the gamekeeper, the village policeman, publican, and poacher also carried shotguns; but the two keepers from the menagerie were armed with rifles. Tinker slowed down as they met.

The Prime Minister's face brightened at the sight of the Lady Noggs safe, and he cried, "Go straight to the Castle! The escaped tiger is in Barrow wood!"

"We've seen him," said Tinker, with no enthusiasm. "He was galloping up the middle

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drive. You'll find him at the top of it." And he sent the car on again, for he had no appetite for a discussion of the matter.

A mile further on he slowed down, and said, "It was plucky of you two to rush at the brute like that."

"I wanted to keep him busy while you two got away," said the Lady Noggs simply.

"So did I," said Elsie.

"That was my idea too. It was funny that we should all have had the same idea," said Tinker.

"It was the only thing to do," said Elsie.

"Yes: and it was all very well for me to do it, but it was very plucky of you two," said Tinker.

"It was pluckiest of Elsie, because she gets frightened quicker than us," said the Lady Noggs.

Elsie flushed faintly at their praise, and said, "It was awfully stupid of me to faint like that."

"No: it wasn't; why, I cried!" said the Lady Noggs quickly.

"It wasn't at all stupid! You didn't faint till it was all over," cried Tinker. "But I'll tell you what was stupid, and that was my leaving the rifle in the car. It was the stupidest thing

I ever heard of." He spoke in a tone of acute distress.

"Never mind: it's all right now," said Elsie.

"How could you tell the beastly tiger was there?" said the Lady Noggs.

"But I do mind: and I ought to have been ready for him. It was idiotic," said Tinker. "And I was frightened when I saw the brute. I didn't know I could be so frightened. I thought you hadn't a chance."

Elsie shivered.

"I was an idiot to leave that rifle!"

"Never mind; you won't do it again," said Elsie.

"Not much," said Tinker, with conviction; and they were silent.

Presently Elsie said in a low voice, "Do you know, you kissed me all of yourself. I've never known you to do that before, only once."

"Did I? Oh, yes—of course," said Tinker hurriedly, in great discomfort. "I was frightened. How are you feeling now?"

"Oh, I'm all right," said Elsie in a tone of great content. "I think I don't mind about the tiger a bit."

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## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### THE DISAPPOINTMENT OF HIRAM ARNOTT

WHEN the children reached Beauleigh, Tinker made Elsie lie down on a sofa, found a bottle of smelling-salts for her, gave her a glass of wine, drew down the blinds, and insisted on complete quiet, that she might repair the injury she had suffered from the shock. She remained pale and listless through the afternoon; but she did not seem to have taken any great harm. None the less they had lost interest in the tiger; and when the Prime Minister and Mr. Borrodaile, returning later in the afternoon to fetch the Lady Noggs, told of its capture, they displayed a strange indifference to the stirring tale. Following Tinker's hasty directions, they had found it lurking in the top of Barrow wood, surrounded it, and with little trouble had driven it into its cage. Mr. Borrodaile was a little disappointed by the coolness with which his narrative was received; and when he questioned the children about their

encounter with the tiger, they displayed a judicious reticence which left on their hearers' minds the impression that they had enjoyed but the merest glimpse of the beast. They adopted this course from motives of prudence, since they had reason to believe that the Prime Minister was often visited by grave doubts of the wisdom of letting the Lady Noggs enjoy much of the stimulating society of Tinker. The stimulation seemed to tend toward efforts unattended by any increase of the comfort of the human race. It came about, therefore, that the two elders departed with the Lady Noggs, never dreaming of the danger the children had been in.

The next morning a policeman came to serve the usual summons on Sir Tancred for allowing Tinker to drive a motor car. Tinker interviewed the policeman himself, displaying a very good air of grave sadness that his effort to preserve the commonwealth from a serious danger should be received in this ungracious fashion. The policeman was abjectly apologetic, protesting how thankless a task he found the performance of this duty. Then Tinker wrote to his father explaining with what reluctance he had been driven, by the humanitarian scruples of Adolphe Roche, to drive the car himself on his errand of

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freeing the neighborhood from a dangerous pest.

Two days later a telegram came saying that Sir Tancred and Dorothy were coming down to Beauleigh with Sonia and Gabriel. Gabriel had not written at once to his father to break the news of his engagement to Sonia. But when, presently, he did write, he received a cablegram two days after posting the letter saying that his father was just leaving for England. He would, therefore, miss the letter, and reach England still ignorant of the arrangement his son had made for his future.

Gabriel at once hurried round to Berkeley Square with his news. He found Sonia and Dorothy in Dorothy's boudoir, and told it them, adding, "I guess that the old man is really coming to fetch me back to get me to work in the canned beef business."

"And you'll have to break the news of your engagement by word of mouth," said Dorothy.

"That's so," said Gabriel glumly.

"Unless you get Tinker to do it," said Dorothy.

Gabriel's face brightened; then he shook his head, and said sadly, "No: that wouldn't do."

"Well, I have to be off to my morning inter-

view with my housekeeper," said Dorothy; and she left them.

Gabriel paced up and down the room in frowning thoughtfulness. Then he said, "I wish I could see my way to work it without my father's help."

"Work what?" said Sonia.

"Our marrying. You see, we've fixed it up that we're going to put in our time and work at the freedom of your people. But my father has fixed it up that I'm going to put in my time and work at the canned beef business. To marry you and get to work—to our work—I shall want money. Now I have my allowance—five thousand dollars a year. But when my father understands that I'm not going into the canned beef business, he'll stop that, maybe. How am I going to keep a wife and work usefully for Russian freedom without money?"

"But there's no need of troubling about money. My estates have not been confiscated yet," said Sonia.

"Your estates!" cried Gabriel.

"But yes; my estates," said Sonia, surprised at his surprise.

"I didn't know you had any estates!"

"But of course. There is one near Tresiat-

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ski and another near Odessa. So there is no need to trouble about money till they are confiscated," said Sonia, with some triumph.

"Are they large?" said Gabriel.

"I get about a hundred thousand roubles a year from them—sometimes more."

"And a rouble's half a dollar. Fifty thousand dollars. This beats the Dutch! And I was thinking—I was thinking——" said Gabriel. He stopped short and paced the room with a very disturbed face.

"What is it troubles you?" said Sonia. "We have never talked about these things, only about Russia."

Gabriel did not answer at once. He was too busy thinking things out. He had taken for granted that Sonia, being a revolutionist, was a girl of the middle classes. The things she had let fall about having seen but little of her father had given him the impression that he was a man of business. Now he found that he was about to marry the daughter of a landed proprietor; and his conscience was troubling him that he, probably penniless and at any rate without any livelihood save an allowance from his father, should have won an heiress.

Sonia broke in upon his effort to see things

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clearly, saying, "Of course I used to be La Comtesse Tresiatki before I joined the revolutionists. Then I became simply Sonia Tresiatki."

"This is worse and worse," said Gabriel.

"But how? Why is it worse and worse?" said Sonia.

"I thought we were on a level; and that if the old man cut off supplies, we should be hard up together. Now it seems you're a bonanza," said Gabriel very sadly.

"Then it isn't. It is better and better. There is no need to trouble about silly money," said Sonia.

Gabriel was silent a moment; then he said firmly, "Well, anyway, it's you I want; and if you have money and titles and estates, I can't help it. I'm going to marry you as soon as it can be managed."

"That's all right," said Sonia.

The next day Dorothy had the idea that it might be well that Hiram Arnott should be exposed for a while to the mellowing influences of an old English country house before Gabriel's plans for his future were sprung upon him. She thought that it might tone down his canning instincts for a while. Accordingly, she invited

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Gabriel to accompany them to Beauleigh and return to Town to fetch his father to be mellowed there as soon as he should arrive. Gabriel accepted the invitation gratefully; and they had not been at Beauleigh three hours before both he and Sonia were profoundly convinced that there could be no such places for love-making in the world as its gardens and woods.

Three days later Gabriel ran up to Town and returned with his father, a vigorous but harmless-looking gentleman of about fifty-five, who wore his hair in a pompador and on his chin a chin-whisker. He proved himself a very entertaining person. He was a self-made man, and in a quiet way uncommonly proud of the job. Since, moreover, he was exceedingly anxious to lose none of the credit he felt due to himself for its admirable execution, he was not at all averse from relating interesting details of the process which had made him what he was. At intervals during the day he received long cables and sent long cables in reply. They all referred to the disposal of tins or, as he called them, cans of his World-wide brand of beef. He complained a little that Beauleigh Court was not in telegraphic communication, by private wire, with London, and that there was no tape-machine to keep him

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perpetually informed of the fluctuations in the shares of his World-wide beef company, so that did the fancy take him, when he awoke in the middle of the night, he could go and rig the market. Also he wrote some two-score letters a day on the subject of his World-wide brand of beef and was careful to tell everyone with quiet pride of this epistolary moderation, alleging that he was having the holiday of his life, employing not even one secretary. As a rule, on a holiday, he employed three, besides a small typewriting staff.

His nerves were rather jagged, from incessant overwork and he had no stomach to speak of, at any rate for digestive purposes. For the most part, when he was not cabling or writing on his subject, he went about the world in a subdued fashion, immersed apparently in a beatific vision of multitudinous tins, or cans, of the World-wide brand of beef stretching from horizon to horizon. Now and again he would awake from the vision to look at his watch and murmur, "Eleven seventy-one cans of the World-wide will be opened per second for the next hour and seventeen minutes. Then in ten seconds it will drop to four twenty-nine."

Or, in the evening, "For every child born

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in New York in the next ten minutes three forty-six cans of the World-wide will be opened."

Once Tinker said with his best air of limpid innocence, "I didn't know that American babies ate such a lot of beef as soon as they were born."

The millionaire snorted with the liveliest derision and said, truthfully but with some inconsequence, "I was giving you statistics, sonny. You shouldn't go mixing up statistics and facts."

Cows were his great, indeed his only, joy. At the sight of a cow he would awake from his vision, a fine flame of enthusiasm would transfigure his face, and he would say, "What I don't know about a cow, from its muzzle to its fly-brush, ain't worth knowing. No—sir. I'd size that animal up to run to two forty-three cans of the World-wide. Yes—sir."

Tinker loved this accomplishment of his. Indeed, it made so deep an impression on him that he set himself to acquire it. He would lure Hiram Arnott out motoring—Adolphe's humanitarian scruples did not extend to the search for cows—and show him cows by the hundred, exacting from him the sum of each cow in tins of beef. Presently he began to do the sums himself; and his father's continuous practice of training his powers of observation stood him in

such good stead that in three days he attained an accuracy which fairly ravished the heart of Hiram Arnott.

To such a height did the millionaire's ravishment reach that he drew Sir Tancred aside one night and said feverishly, "That boy of yours."

"Yes?" said Sir Tancred.

"He's a genius," said the millionaire.

"What's he been doing now?" said Sir Tancred, with some suspicion.

"Sir—that boy can size up a cow to a can—as close as I can do it myself. Yes—sir," said the millionaire with a restrained, ardent fervor.

"I don't understand," said Sir Tancred, puzzled.

"He can tell by the look of a cow how many cans of the World-wide she will run to," said the millionaire with a sudden, startling slap on his thigh.

"Ah, yes?" said Sir Tancred, striving to be polite, but in a puzzled wonder why cows should run to these cans and not walk quietly to them.

"And you er—think it desirable that cows should run to these—er—cans of the World-wide?"

"Sakes alive! Where should I be if they didn't?" cried the millionaire.

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"Ah, of course," said Sir Tancred vaguely.

"Well, that boy was born for the World-wide; and I want him in the business."

"It's a little odd that whenever a millionaire sees Tinker, he wants him for his business. Septimus Rainer, Lady Beauleigh's father, wanted him for his business," said Sir Tancred.

"But he's got a natural gift for my business, a gift that will be worth a pile of dollars to him! Why, I tell you, he ought to begin a course of butchering right off!" cried Hiram Arnott. "And there's the by-products of the cow, hide, horns, hoofs, glue!"

"But Tinker is going into the Diplomatic Service," said Sir Tancred.

"The Diplomatic Service!" cried the millionaire, with the last scorn. "The human race don't want diplomacy; it wants beef—the World-wide."

Sir Tancred realized that his guest was a man obsessed by a fixed idea, his World-wide brand of beef; and he said, "And what does Tinker say?"

"Oh, him? I haven't laid the proposition before him—yet. I always deal with principals. So I came straight to you as soon as I'd figured it out."

"But I should not dream of interfering in a matter of this kind. You see I've always trained Tinker in a knowledge of the world, so that he is really more capable of deciding on his future career than most boys of twenty. You'll have to get his consent," said Sir Tancred, passing the struggle on.

"Oh, I'll soon fix him!" cried the millionaire cheerfully; and he hurried away to do it.

His buoyant confidence was misplaced. When he made his proposal to Tinker, Tinker said, "Thank you very much; but I'm going into the Diplomatic Service."

"It's a waste—a dead waste of a natural gift!" cried the millionaire.

"Well, if I don't go into the diplomatic, I think I should like to be a writer and write story-books," said Tinker, with an air of deep thoughtfulness, since the idea had at that very moment presented itself to him for the first time.

"A writer! A dodgasted writer! The human race don't want literatoor; it wants beef—the World-wide!" cried the millionaire.

Tinker was gentle with him, but very firm. He would hold out no hope of his pledging himself to the World-wide.

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That night Sir Tancred told Dorothy how thankful he was that her father was not the Hiram Arnott type of millionaire.

"I don't know why you should be. Mr. Arnott is a very harmless old man," said Dorothy, laughing.

"I doubt it. I believe he's got a cloven hoof—a cow's hoof—concealed about his person—probably in his boots."

Tinker's refusal to go into the World-wide did not weaken his friendly intimacy with the millionaire, who still made him his chosen companion. When Sir Tancred was fined five pounds for allowing Tinker to drive a motor car, Hiram Arnott condoled with the boy in his chagrin that his father should have been so mulcted for the humanitarian scruples, in the matter of tigers, of the chauffeur Adolphe. Then he said artfully, "Ah, sonny, you should come to the States; that's a free country. Why, you could drive a locomotive there, and no one would say a word."

"I'm going to take it out of old Stiffgate," said Tinker firmly.

They still continued their game of sizing up cows from the point of view of the World-wide; and often others were lured into it, Sonia, Doro-

thy, Gabriel, and Elsie. Curiously enough, while Sonia showed an aptness for it, Gabriel proved himself an utter failure. But then his mind was incapable of the close application the game required, so full was it of Sonia and of the contents of the books on Russia he was so carefully reading. Sonia's aptness caused the millionaire to regard her with a kindly eye and to express his regrets that she was not a young man, in which case he could have found her a place in his business. Then Tinker, whose active mind could never be content with one sphere for long, invented a variation of the game; he began to calculate to how many tins of the World-wide different human beings would run. At first Hiram Arnott was horrified: the variation seemed to him to savor of sacrilege and cannibalism. But Tinker was patient with his scruples and presently drew him into the amusement. It began to seem likely that, with his predisposition to obsession by fixed ideas, the millionaire might come not only to regard beef as the sole requirement of the human race, but also to regard the human race as beef. Indeed, he went so far as to hint regretfully that it was a pity that the human race was not self-supporting.

Gabriel fondly believed that his father had

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observed the terms on which he was with Sonia. He had not grasped the fact that Hiram Arnett's mental powers had practically grown disused to working on any matters not connected with the production and distribution of cans of beef. He was awakened to the fact of his father's ignorance of his love affair, and to the necessity of informing him of the future he had chosen, by the millionaire saying to him one morning, "It's time we got home and to work. The *Teutonic* sails to-morrow, we'd better catch it and go."

"I don't know about going back to the States. But I certainly want to marry and get to work, dad," said Gabriel.

"You want to marry, do you?" said his father, regarding him thoughtfully. "Well, there ain't nothing against marriage for a young man. I married myself before I was as old as you. But what's the matter with the States? I guess you can find as whole-souled a young woman in the States as anywhere else, and more so."

"But I have asked the Countess Tresiatzki to marry me, and she has consented," said Gabriel.

"So you've fixed it up already, have you?"

Well, I should judge that the Countess was a very whole-souled, bright young woman; she sized up a cow to within four cans of my calculation yesterday. That's good—very good for a young woman. She'll help you take a real lively interest in the business. We can catch the *Teutonic* to-morrow, and she come with us, and we can fix up your wedding on the steamer. Then there'll be no time wasted. You've got a lot to learn before you'll know a cow from the muzzle to the fly-brush; and you ought to be taking hold of it at once. I've had my holiday—the holiday of my life—and I'm going to get hustling again and see that everyone round hustles too. Besides, it will make a fine story for the reporters how the heir of the World-wide was such a hustler that he got married on a steamer to save time, to a Countess, too. Why, it'll start you with a cast-iron reputation, and it'll be a first-class ad. for the World-wide."

"But we weren't thinking of going to the States," said Gabriel.

"You weren't thinking of going to the States! Then what in thunder were you thinking? I'm not figuring to have you in the Paris or Berlin agency! I want you in the yards!" cried the millionaire.

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"I've been thinking things out, father. And I've made up my mind that I don't want to go into the World-wide," said Gabriel gently.

"Sakes alive! What do you want?" cried the millionaire, gripping his chin-whisker with one hand and his pompadour with the other.

"I want to help these unfortunate Russians get their freedom," said Gabriel.

"Freedom! Help the Russians get their freedom! That's—that's one of those foolish, dodgasted ideas a young man gets in his head in these effete, played-out countries! It was time I came over to drive a little horse-sense into you!" cried his father, ruffling his pompadour into the exact semblance of the tuft of an excited cockatoo.

"Well, anyway, I shall be foolish with a lot of the finest men the world has known—men who spent all their lives helping human freedom," Gabriel protested.

"You're talking through your hat; it didn't amount to a row of beans!" cried his father, in the last exasperation. "Freedom! The human race don't want freedom; it wants beef—the World-wide! Why, there ain't any such thing as freedom—not for most people anyway. God's own little country, the United States, is

the freest on earth, I guess. And who's free in it? I'm free and John D. Rockefeller's free, and Rogers and Frick and Armour, and Morgan and Hill and some more of the steel and oil and railroad and Wall Street gangs; and some of those politicians are free—old man Addicks, and Depew, and Quay. But the others—they just do as they're told—as we tell 'em! And they hustle round at it, too! Freedom! It makes me tired! The human race don't want freedom; it wants beef. What's freedom without beef?"

"What's beef without freedom?" said Gabriel.

"There you go!" cried the millionaire, in a terrible voice. "Ladling out the dodgasted foolishness of these effete, worn-out old countries! If you're set on working out the freedom of these durned Polacks, you'll do it without my money. It isn't going to be wasted on any such foolishness. And you'll find you'll have to put in all your work and all your time making money to buy the World-wide—freedom won't get much of a show with you."

"Sonia's money will save that waste, anyway," said Gabriel. "And it's not much we shall want when once we get seriously to work."

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"What?" shrieked the millionaire. "A free-born American—and you talk of living on your wife's dollars! Oh, this Europe! It's—it's corrupting!"

"I may just as well live on Sonia's money doing the work I want, as on your money doing the work I don't want, dad," said Gabriel.

"This is the kind of gratitude a parent gets nowadays," groaned the millionaire. "I've never stinted you in anything. You've always had as much money as a boy could want; and this is the thanks for it."

"I don't suppose if you came to figure it out, it would average out more than one per cent. of your income, dad; and one per cent. of my gratitude is for the money. No: it's the care and thought I'm grateful for; and I'm really sorry, very sorry, I've got to disappoint you about going into the World-wide."

"How much does it amount to, this money of Sonia's?" said the millionaire.

"Fifty thousand—dollars—a year," said Gabriel.

"Fifty thousand! A miserable fifty thousand a year! You sell your birthright—your heirship of the World-wide, for fifty thousand a year! Why, if you hustled in the business for

ten years, you would be making your fifty thousand a week! Oh, to think I've reared an Esau—an Esau!"

"You know I'm not thinking of the dollars, dad," said Gabriel gently. "But there, let's drop the money. I don't see that because you're not supplying me with money we're any less father and son. It needn't make any difference to our feelings about one another."

"Not make any difference!" cried the millionaire in a fresh access of indignation. "When you're figuring to live on someone else's dollars and not mine! It's onnatural! Oh, what a thing it is to have a son with a gall like yours!"

"But you said I shouldn't live on your money," said Gabriel in some bewilderment.

"You think I'm going to let someone else support you—and a woman and a foreigner at that! It's just the cold-bloodedest proposition a son ever brought to his father!" said the millionaire; and his indignation had grown righteous.

"Well, what is your proposition?" said Gabriel.

"I'm going to allow you just twice as much—a hundred thousand dollars a year."

"Thank——" Gabriel began.

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"I don't want any thanks!" said his father irritably, cutting him short. "And you can bear in mind that it's all you'll get, while I'm alive; and when I hand in my checks, five millions is every cent you need expect. But right from now I wash my hands of you—at any rate till you've mussed up the freedom of those dodgasted Russians, and come to your senses, and are ready to go into the World-wide. I'm catching the *Teutonic* to-morrow."

With that he stalked haughtily out of the room. He was quite wrong in believing that he would catch the *Teutonic* on the morrow. His ever resentful stomach was not going to lose the chance afforded it by the disturbance of his soul at Gabriel's rejection of the World-wide; and it had him prostrate before morning. The local doctor visited him, was even about to prescribe, when he learned that he was an American millionaire, and at once suggested that a great specialist and two nurses should be summoned. A wire was sent off at once; the great specialist with the two nurses came down to Beauleigh in the afternoon; and the two doctors conferred and prescribed with portentous gravity. In spite, however, of their taking him so seriously, he got no better.

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He was not very ill, not nearly ill enough, indeed, to be unable to fret his heart out at the interruption of his propagation of cans of the World-wide, though Gabriel relieved the strain by concocting the necessary cables and writing his letters.

On the seventh day of his illness the millionaire said sternly, with the air of one who has come to a great resolve, "These dodgasted doctors make me tired. I don't take no stock in their European drugs. What my stomach wants is a bottle of Count Marcus's Parabole, the twenty-five cent size. It's made it spry before; and it'll make it spry again. Besides, I own stock in the company. You go to London City and bring me a bottle—two bottles. And while you're there just fix up your marriage with the Countess; get the permit. There's a wad of notes in my dressing-case. The sooner you get to your durned Russian freedom the sooner you'll be quit of the foolishness, and ready for the World-wide. I always did think that your marriage would make a story for the reporters and a good ad. for the World-wide. But I see it ain't to be. If this durned Russian freedom foolishness of yours gets blown upon, you won't have to hunt trouble; it'll hunt you. Get

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your permit and get married quietly. Now hustle!"

Gabriel now hustled. Fortunately that admirable specific, the Parable of the Count with the ancient name, was at the moment being largely advertised in the press of the United Kingdom, and he procured easily two bottles of it. He bought a special license; and he called also on the American Consul and set moving the business of Sonia's obtaining the citizenship of the United States, a business which the mention of his father's name promised to expedite greatly. They had decided that this would be a useful precaution, since if, in the course of their endeavors to deal faithfully with the Russian Government, Sonia were arrested, the fact that she was an American citizen, a Countess, and the wife of the heir of the World-wide would make the great-hearted American Press and Public get, as Gabriel phrased it, on their hindlegs and prance till she was released with abject apologies.

Then he returned to Beauleigh to wait till the restorative action of the Parable of Count Marcus should enable his father to be present at his wedding.

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## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### TINKER GIVES A GREAT EXPERT A LITTLE JOB

SINCE the fining of his father Tinker had been busy trying to discover some means of avenging on Colonel Stiffgate the injustice of it. He recognized the eccentricities of the law, and was even disposed on most occasions to humor them. But he found that to fine his father because Elsie had been compelled to drive the car, on his chivalrous errand of ridding the neighborhood of a dangerous pest, owing to the humanitarian scruples of a Swiss chauffeur, or as he phrased it, "Taking it out of my father because Adolphe funk'd and Elsie had to drive the car to hunt the tiger," seemed to him to pass the legitimate bounds of eccentricity. Colonel Stiffgate, the prime mover in the sequence of events which had led to the law's last action, must be punished.

But he cudgeled his brains in vain, even though he was at the pains to stimulate them by swearing, along with Elsie and the Lady

Noggs, a formal blood feud against the House of Stiffgate. He could find no vengeance dire enough to satisfy him.

As soon as Hiram Arnott was on the way to recovery and very full of apologies to Sir Tancred and Dorothy for the trouble he had given them by falling ill at Beauleigh, Tinker was among those who helped to while away the tedium of recovery. Hiram Arnott, more than ever obsessed, in his weakness, by his fixed idea, returned again and again, with the pertinacity which had made his cans of beef so innumerable world-wide, to the attempt to lure this most promising recruit into his business. He held out every inducement which could be expected to tempt a small boy, offering, in fact, to put him on the level, in the matter of amusements, sports, games, yachts, motor cars, horses, with America's proudest millionaire princelets—out of business hours. He seemed, above all, to have the greatest faith in one curious bait he was always dangling before him, the fact that, once a dollar princelet, the reporters would always be telling stories of his doings in the Sunday papers. It looked, indeed, as if he had formed a plan of entirely replacing the renegade Gabriel by him.

Tinker bore with this perpetual endeavor

with his usual seraphic patience and politeness until, finding that the millionaire was beginning to think that he had really pledged himself to the World-wide, he said one day with less than his usual gentleness, "It's really no good bothering me about the World-wide. Why should I want to go and be a butcher and can beef with a lot of bounders? It isn't good enough, don't you know?"

"Not good enough? Why, look at the dollars you'll make! One of these days I shouldn't wonder you might be able to call my pile!"

"But what about my stomach?" said Tinker.

"Your stomach?"

"Yes; I've been thinking about it. What good would it be, if I got a stomach like yours, getting them?" said Tinker, with perfect good faith.

"Look here, sonny, don't get funning. It's the chance of a lifetime," said the millionaire impressively. "Why, I could have the pick of the sons of America's proudest citizens on the terms I'm offering you."

"All the same, it isn't good enough—not for me," said Tinker.

"Aw, it ain't gentlemanly enough for you!" sneered the millionaire.

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"No: it's not that, I think. Because a gentleman can do anything that's—that's on the square, if he has to. But it isn't the kind of work I want to do. I can't quite say what I want. But it's the kind of work anybody could do," said Tinker, knitting his brow in the painful effort to express himself.

"Anybody! Anybody build up the World-wide!" cried the millionaire.

"Perhaps not build it up. I should think that was rather fun."

"Fun! Fun! It's plumb nigh wore me out!" shrieked the millionaire.

"Well, you must have enjoyed it awfully, or you wouldn't be so keen on it, don't you know?" said Tinker firmly.

Hiram Arnott was gasping; and Tinker went on, "But now it's built up, where's the fun in it? Ordinary shop-keeper kind of people can keep it going."

"But—but—the dollars! You're missing the point! Look at the hundreds of thousands of dollars you'll make!" cried the millionaire.

"But it would be such a bore making them like that—by being a butcher. And an awful lot of money is an awful bother. Look at the millionaires—those South Africans—what a

crew they are. They don't enjoy themselves at all really. And I don't want a lot. I could do with twenty thousand a year, of course; but it isn't worth spending all my life getting. I shall make enough out of diplomacy to get along on; and I shall like the work. It's rather good sort of work, don't you know?"

"Good! And ain't the World-wide good? Do you suppose that all the millions of folk would eat it as they do, if it weren't good?" said the millionaire.

"Oh, yes; of course. I didn't mean to say it wasn't good," said Tinker. "Only if they didn't get tinned beef, I expect they'd have fresh. And it's much nicer."

"You make me tired!" said the millionaire. "Don't you see, you dodgasted little fool, that getting their beef canned and cheap gives them all the more time to make their pile!"

Tinker started; the pupils of his eyes contracted; and the bow of his lip narrowed to a straight line:

"I dare say it does," he said very coldly. "But I think they'd better spend their time learning to be gentlemen. Anyhow, I'm not going to be a butcher." And he turned and sauntered out of the room.

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"Here! I say, sonny! I didn't mean to call names! I was only joshing!" cried the millionaire.

"Oh, that's all right," said Tinker quietly. But he did not turn back.

He sauntered downstairs and out into the garden, going very slowly to let his anger cool. The fact that he was well used to abuse from those whose lives he had tried to brighten, did not at all make him resent less undeserved abuse. On the cedar lawn he saw Sir Tancred and Dorothy and sauntered up to them.

As he came up, Sir Tancred said, "Oh, I've been wanting to see you. They've written to me asking us to lend our motor cars to take voters to the poll in this bye-election. Shall I tell them you will lend them yours?"

"Oh, yes; I don't mind," said Tinker.

"Old Stiffgate is working hard for the Liberals," said Sir Tancred to Dorothy. "There's no enthusiast like a renegade."

Tinker pricked up his ears. Colonel Stiffgate had been a Tory of the Tories till a Tory government had refused to stultify the War Office and itself by reinstating him in the command from which he had been hastily but firmly recalled, of what his blunders on the banks of the

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Tugala had left of his regiment. After his failure to get returned to South Africa he had become a Liberal of the Liberals, had distinguished himself at the general election, and had seized upon the present bye-election as a fresh chance of distinguishing himself in the cause he had adopted so late in life, and of injuring the Conservatives.

"What's he been doing?" said Tinker quickly.

"He's canvassing, taking the chair at Liberal meetings, and making speeches—the usual bag of tricks," said Sir Tancred.

"It won't matter at all. Nobody will do as he says; they all hate him so," said Tinker cheerfully.

With that he left them hurriedly; for it had suddenly occurred to him that the electioneering efforts of Colonel Stiffgate might afford him the chance of vengeance which he had so vainly sought. He sent a footman to tell Adolphe to bring round the motor car; then whistled a secret signal which brought Elsie hurrying down to him hat in hand. They went out on to the steps, where he assumed firmly the gloomy air of the avenger. Elsie recognized it at once; she had come to know it well.

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Then he said in the avenger's terrible voice, "We're on the trail of Stiffgate."

Elsie said "Oh," put on her hat, and slipped back into the hall to consult a mirror as to its straightness.

Adolphe brought round the car and they got into it.

"Stiffgate Hall," said Tinker, with gloomy curtness.

Adolphe set the car going and ran at a fair pace to the bottom of the long hill leading up to the house of the Stiffgates. Then he slowed down, as he had always been instructed to do, and went up the hill at a crawl, in order that Tinker and Elsie might examine the landscape thoroughly for some object which might serve as the basis of a scheme of vengeance.

On either side of the road were meadows; and Colonel Stiffgate had just renewed the posts and gates which gave access to the road from the meadows. They had not yet been painted, and like most of man's work they disfigured the green of the fields and hedgerows, presenting a somewhat skeleton-like air.

Of a sudden Tinker emitted a piercing yell which made Adolphe leap in his seat, and mutter horribly after settling down in it again. Elsie

did not even start: she was used to the war-whoop of the Hurons. She only looked inquiringly at Tinker.

"I've got it!" said Tinker; and his eyes were shining and his face alight with triumphant delight. Then it grew dark as he frowned, nodded towards Adolphe, and added, "But hist! we are observed."

Elsie's eyes shone in sympathy with him; and then, in sympathy also, her face darkened as she looked at the unconscious Adolphe. All up the hill and down the further side of it Tinker considered the gates with a dark, calculating eye, and as they passed the great, wrought-iron gates of Stiffgate Hall itself, his face brightened for a moment with a fresh delight. At the bottom of the hill he bade Adolphe turn, and considered the gates all the way up it and half way down it. In the middle of the descent he relaxed his intent attitude, and leaned back in the car with a contented sigh, and a most seraphic smile. His eyes rested on Adolphe and filled slowly with a new thoughtfulness. Of a sudden he started up, cried "Stop!" and shading his eyes with his hand stared hard across the fields. Elsie and Adolphe looked up at him, wondering.

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"Look!" he cried. "Look! Coming through the third hedge! It's—it's—yes! It's another tiger escaped!"

Elsie rose, Adolphe sprang to his feet; and they stared. They could see nothing.

"Vare? Vare?" said Adolphe in a trembling voice.

"There! There! About the middle of the hedge! The third hedge!" cried Tinker, nudging Elsie.

With the admirable promptitude which companionship with Tinker induces in the young, Elsie, as she would have phrased it, tumbled to his game. She gripped Adolphe's arm and cried, "Don't you see? Don't you see? It's larger than the other one!"

With an excellent imitation of the howl of a dog, Adolphe dropped down into his seat, and set the car going. It flew down the hill, whirled round the corner, and tore along the stretch of straight road. Tinker and Elsie held on for dear life. When it came to the winding road, Tinker shouted in Adolphe's ear, "You might—upset—and get stunned—and come to—to find the tiger eating you—comfortably!"

With a deep sob Adolphe dropped on to the second speed and jammed on the brakes vio-

lently. Then when the car slowed down he put on the first speed again, presently jammed on the brakes; and by a repetition of this jarring process jerked the car to Beauleigh Court. As they got out of it they observed that Adolphe looked as unlike the Merry Swiss Boy of Song as it is possible for a human being to look: his eyes seemed to be bidding a painful adieu to their sockets; his white face was contorted into a grotesque mask; and the beads of sweat glistened clammily all over it.

Usually so surefooted, both of them stumbled in their haste to get up the steps into the hall. When they reached its kindly shelter they had to hold on to one another lest in their paroxysms of childish glee they should fall to the floor.

The butler, who had suffered himself from their efforts to brighten life, watched them with a stern, pained air. Presently he said gloomily, "I don't know what you've been up to, Master Tinker; but if you go on like that you'll do yourself a hinternal hinjury."

"All right, Wilkins—all right: we shall be better presently," panted Tinker. And arm in arm they ascended slowly the stairs, pausing now and again in the ascent to let pass another paroxysm of childish glee.

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At the top of the first flight they sank on to a lounge, and lay back till they had recovered.

Then Tinker said, "Well, we've got square with Adolphe for funking that tiger, anyhow."

"Rather," said Elsie, wiping her eyes, "But what's the vengeance on Stiffgate, our hereditary foe? You've found it, haven't you?"

At once Tinker assumed the air of the avenger, and looking very darkly at nothing in particular, he said, "I've found it. You saw those new gate-posts?"

"Yes."

"I'm going to paint them blue—not all of them, but one to each gate, because that way they'll look like odd ones and funnier."

"I see," said Elsie. "But why blue?"

"Because Stiffgate's a Liberal, of course; and blue's the Conservative color."

"Oh, I see! How splendid!" cried Elsie, her eyes shining very brightly with admiration and delight.

"Won't he be mad?" said Tinker, with a sigh of luxurious content. "Everybody will laugh at him."

"He will be mad. And won't Noggs be pleased?" said Elsie.

They were eager to get to the Lady Noggs

that afternoon to impart to her the glorious plan; but there was no stirring Adolphe from the motor-house. His merry Swiss blood boiled at the thought of again being confronted by a tiger; but he alleged, as indeed seemed very probable, that the car had suffered such shocks in its frantic efforts to bear them out of danger, that he would be two days repairing it. Fortunately, however, the Lady Noggs rode over that afternoon on her pony; and as soon as she had changed her riding skirt for a short one of Elsie's they hurried her away to the secluded peacock lawn—so called from the four yews clipped into the shape of peacocks at its corners—and informed her of the admirable invention. She was overcome with joy; she laughed; she danced; she cried again and again that it was splendid. Then she demanded that she, too, should bear a hand in the glorious task.

Tinker explained that considerations of time and distance prevented this joy. Then to divert her from her disappointment, he said, "Well, I think we ought to dance the war-dance before setting out on this war-path."

Elsie and the Lady Noggs saw at once the propriety of this course; and without further

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words they began what they fondly called the war-dance of the Hurons. A chief feature of the dance was that every few steps all the participants emitted a piercing yell in unison. It was a good deal more piercing than in unison; and at the third yell Gabriel and Sonia came rushing on to the lawn, from an adjacent secluded lawn, with scared faces.

"What is it? What's the matter?" cried Gabriel.

The dancers stopped; Tinker regarded the intruders with a lowering scowl; pointed to the exit from the lawn; and said in a terrible voice, "Go, ignorant pale-faces who interrupt the war-dance! Go!"

"Oh, sorry! Beg pardon! I didn't know," said Gabriel. And he and Sonia went hastily and humbly.

The children resumed firmly the interrupted ceremony. Far away in the house on the hill Colonel Stiffgate, all ignorant of the impending vengeance, was bellowing at his jaded butler.

After a spell of violent activity, hoarse, breathless, perspiring, but filled with the easiness of mind which follows the exact performance of a necessary formality, the children sat down to consider the ways and means of accomplishing

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the act of vengeance. Paint was their first need; and paint the procuring and possession of which could not be traced to them. After some deliberation Tinker resolved to take the train to Southampton on the morrow, and buy it there, Elsie should meet him at the station, and they would leave it in the motor house till the night, when they would do the deed. It was well that the night chanced to be moonless, and therefore favorable to their desire that their vengeance should be as speedy as it was secret, since it saved them from a painful impatience. Having resolved on these measures, they went up to the house to remove the stains of the war-dance before tea. As he passed the housekeeper's room, Tinker slipped into it and out with two dust-sheets from the open linen-cupboard.

"We must hide every trace of the deed and these will help," he said firmly. And he locked them in one of his drawers.

When they came down to tea on the lawn they found that Hiram Arnott had felt so much better that he had come out and joined the party. He was not, indeed, very cheerful; but he wore in a marked degree his best air of the brainy and resourceful man; all his remarks were of the curt and snappy kind. Indeed it

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was plain that he moved, or rather sat, in a magnificent vision of a new beef campaign.

The others, without by any means excluding him from their talk and laughter, did not make any effort to draw him into it, since it was plain enough that he regarded it with some impatience as idle. They left him in peace with his strenuous dream. But at the end of tea he cleared his throat with emphatic sternness and said, "I've got to be getting back to the States. I must catch the *Campania* on Thursday and today's Monday. I've had the holiday of my life, barring this little attack of stomach trouble. And I thank you, Sir Tancred and Lady Beauleigh, for your profuse hospitality. But before I go I want to see these two young people fixed up. As I've told Gabriel the sooner he gets on to this Russian freedom foolishness the sooner he'll get fed up with it and quit. There's no cause for him to waste two or three months getting married; and I want to see it done before I go. He's got the permit. Can it be done here on Wednesday? Or shall I take them up to London city and put it through there?"

"Oh, if Gabriel's got a special license, it can be done here," said Sir Tancred.

"But, Mr. Arnott!" cried Dorothy, "it's

not fair on Sonia. Her trousseau isn't ready! And why can't she have a proper wedding with bridesmaids and—and presents—and friends—like other girls?"

"I want it done, Lady Beauleigh. Gabriel's wasted time enough already careering about Europe; and the World-wide waits for no man—no, nor for no woman, either," said Hiram Arnott, waving his hand in a splendid gesture.

"Well, Sonia and I have settled that. Haven't we, Sonia?" said Gabriel.

"Yes; we have said we do not wish a big wedding and—and—fuss. It costs much money, and we want all the money for Russia. But Wednesday—oh, Wednesday is so very soon," said Sonia, blushing.

"It's not too soon—not a bit too soon for me," said Gabriel.

Sonia looked at him; and then said, "Oh, if it must be so, it must."

"That's fixed then," said Hiram Arnott triumphantly.

At once their elders plunged into a discussion of arrangements; and the children slipped away. They went up to Tinker's and Elsie's sitting-room; Tinker fetched one of the dust-sheets; and they set about making it into an apron

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which should prevent his clothes acquiring any traces of paint by which the deed of vengeance might be traced to them. None of them were experts with the needle; but Elsie and the Lady Noggs had some skill; and at the end of an hour's work they had turned out an apron which, covering the front of him from the chin to the toes, would serve this purpose.

All that evening and the next morning Tinker wore terribly the air of the avenger. Soon after breakfast Adolphe, who had had time to learn that the children must have been mistaken in thinking that they had seen another escaped tiger, drove him and Elsie to Micklefield station, whence he went on alone to Southampton. He returned, triumphant, at four in the afternoon, bringing with him a wooden box some two feet square containing tins of paints, and a parcel containing paint-brushes. Elsie and the motor car were waiting for him; and he was back at Beauleigh just as they were finishing tea. For the rest of the afternoon and in the evening his air of the avenger was positively oppressive in its balefulness.

The two children went off to bed early. At half-past twelve, Tinker having been awakened by an alarm, they slipped out of the house and

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out to the motor-house. In two minutes Tinker had pried the lid off the box and laid the paint-brushes handy on the top of the uncovered tins; then he tied on his apron, spread the other dust sheet over the car and put the box of paint tins into it. He was wearing gloves and a pair of gymnasium shoes which he could throw away when he had done with them. They went very quietly at a moderate pace, and ran up the hill past Stiffgate Hall, and to the bottom on the further side. They stopped at the first gate; he got out of the car, took a tin of paint, and fell to work on its right-hand post.

He had plenty of paint; and he splashed it on freely and quickly. In less than five minutes the post was painted; and he crossed the road to the next gate. To secure a greater diversity, he painted its left-hand post. In the middle of it he emptied his first tin of paint, fetched another from the car, and put the empty tin back in the box. When he had finished the second post, Elsie drove him up the road to the next two posts. He painted quickly post after post, acquiring greater quickness and dexterity with each. He painted posts all up the hill and down the further ascent to the bottom, eighteen in all. He had but one accident, at the fifth post, where

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he spilled half a tin of paint, and put half his foot in it. From the bottom of the hill they drove back to the top, to the most difficult part of the task, and stopped the car thirty yards from the tall iron gates of the Hall garden. Elsie turned it, kept the engine going, since Tinker had decided that they must take the risk of its noise drawing attention to them, and sat ready to start the moment Tinker reached it, should he have to run for it. He took a tin of paint and went stealthily to the Hall gates. The post was between nine and ten feet high; and he set about painting the lower part of it from a point as high as he could reach. He found that the smooth iron took the paint far more easily than had the rougher wood of the posts of the meadow gates; and he finished the lower part very quickly. Then to paint the top he climbed on to the gate. Holding on to a spike with his right hand, he wedged the tin between two other spikes, and painted with his left hand. It was slower than his right; but at last his task was done. He seized the tin; dropped lightly to the ground; and ran back to the car with joyful heart.

He put the tin and the paint-brush into the box, drew himself up, shook his fist towards the

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Hall, and said, "Ha! Ha! The vengeance of the House of Beauleigh is accomplished!"

Elsie imitated his gesture and said, "Ha! Ha! The vengeance of the House of Beauleigh is accomplished!"

He stepped into the car; and she drove down the hill, and away to Beauleigh. At the corner of the home wood she stopped. He took off his shoes and apron and gloves; put them in the box with the empty tins, and rolled everything in the other dust-sheet, which had covered the car. Then he put on another pair of shoes, carried the bundle into the wood, and hid it in a hollow tree, a secret hiding-place they often used. He came back to the car, and Elsie drove it home. They turned on the electric light in the motor-house and examined the car carefully for blue paint. They could not find a speck on it. They ate some cake, drank lemonade, and went to bed in a great content.

Though he had thus taken a few hours from the night, Tinker was awake at eight o'clock and he knocked at Elsie's door and awoke her. She rang for her maid; and very soon after he was dressed, she joined him; and they went out into the garden. At the back of the house they found the gardeners and grooms, gathered in a group,

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discussing some matter with no little vehemence. As they came up to the group their eyes opened, rather wider than was natural to them, in a limpid innocence, and Tinker said to the head-gardener, "What's the matter, Mackenzie?"

"Well, sir, someone has painted all the gate-posts up and down Stiffgate Hill blue. McCann said as how it might be you, sir, seeing as you generally has a hand in all the—all the—all them sorts of things, sir, as is done in these parts."

"How could Master Tinker paint a matter of twenty posts in a night? It's two or three days work for a man," broke in Mathers, the head-groom, impatiently. "I say as it was some of them chaps from Micklefield."

Tinker saw at once the error of his reckoning: a man would paint the gates as well as all the posts in two or three days. He did not point it out; he changed the subject of discussion by saying, "But why did they paint them *blue*?"

"Well, you see, sir, Colonel Stiffgate he's a Liberal; and blue's the Conservative color. It's just a dastardly election trick. That's what I call it!"

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"Yes; that's what it is!" cried a chorus of gardeners.

"No: it ain't! Serve the old turn-coat jolly well right! That's what I say!" said Mathers.

"Yes; serve the old turn-coat jolly well right!" cried a chorus of grooms.

By some inexplicable, but quite definite, intellectual law the grooms who had to deal with that noble animal, the horse, were all Conservatives; the gardeners who dealt with a lower department of nature were all Liberals.

"Where's your fair-play?" said Mackenzie, with righteous indignation.

"Yes, yes; fair-play!" cried a chorus of gardeners.

"Rennygades don't deserve no fair-play!" said Mathers, with an equally righteous indignation.

"No rennygades 'ere!" cried a chorus of grooms.

"Where do you say these posts are?" said Tinker, raising his voice above the din of warring factions.

"Up and down Stiffgate hill—both sides on it," said Mackenzie.

"Yes; both sides on it!" cried a chorus of gardeners.

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"Shall I find them easily?" said Tinker.

"You can't miss 'em, sir. They'll show themselves to you all right. They shine blue for miles," said Mathers.

"For miles an' miles!" cried a chorus of grooms, with jeering laughter.

"All right. I'll go and look at them after breakfast," said Tinker.

With that he left the politicians to their debate, assured that by two or three judicious questions, the answers to which he had had every opportunity of knowing long before anyone else, he had spread abroad in the lower ranks of the social hierarchy a belief in his utter ignorance of the matter.

The affair of the blue posts was the subject of the talk of the breakfast table. Sir Tancred had learned of it from his valet, Lady Beauleigh from her maid. Everyone was inclined to attribute it to political enthusiasm. But Sir Tancred, who enjoyed, from unbroken intercourse with him, a far more exact knowledge of his angel child's powers of brightening the lives of those around him, looked many times at Tinker with ill-veiled suspicion. Tinker, who had learned not to try the eyes of limpid innocence on his father, kept them their usual size;

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but early in the discussion he told them the theory of Mathers that it was the work of a gang of Conservative workingmen from Micklefield, and was careful to adduce that worthy's computation of the length of time the painting would take, in support of it. Sir Tancred expressed his regret that he could not find the time to go and see the outrage for himself; but Sonia and Gabriel were to be married at eleven, and he had to keep an eye on Gabriel, who was in a state of extreme nervous tension.

Tinker and Elsie hurried away before breakfast was over; and Adolphe drove them up to Stiffgate Hall. The blue posts formed a most remarkable feature of the landscape; and it was indeed a fact that those emblems of true Conservatism caught the eye from miles away. They had timed their arrival at the Hall well, for the purple Stiffgate stood in the roadway before it bellowing in turn at his head-gardener, his head-gamekeeper, and a village policeman. For a while his forceful bellowings ran on their neglect of duty. Tinker and Elsie got out of the car and joined the band of interested villagers and servants who stood round admiring the vigor of his diction. Then his bellowings turned on the delinquents and what detection would

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bring to them. He bellowed for a while of bootings and horsewhipping; then he bellowed of the terrors of the law, of hard labor and penal servitude. Then he bellowed that now and there he was going to invoke the aid of Scotland Yard and expressed his certain, but possibly fond hope, that its detectives would have the evil-doers by the heels before evening.

Then he paused, started back from the verge of apoplexy, gasping for breath; and the clear voice of Tinker said, "Why don't you send for Baldock Bowles?"

At the name of the famous scientific investigator of crime, a shuffling murmur ran through the attentive group. Colonel Stiffgate turned on Tinker with the apoplectic glare of a ravening lion; but he had no breath left to bellow a rejection, and while he was getting it, the brilliant suggestion had time to permeate the fat which coated so thickly the outside and inside of his skull.

Then he panted, "By Jove—young Beau-leigh—that's a good idea!—I'll wire—to—to—him—to—to come—down—by the 12.15!"

He hung his head and panted again. Then he gathered his strength for another fine effort, fixed his head-groom with a furious eye, and

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bellowed, "What are you standing there for, you loafing lout? A horse! Idiot! A horse! Fool! A horse! Blockhead!"

The welkin rang for all it was worth; and all the grooms dashed for the stables.

The purple Stiffgate took breath again, then turned on his butler, and bellowed, "Don't stand there doing nothing, dolt! Brandy! Soda! You idle hound! Pen! Ink! Telegraph form! Hurry, you blazing idiot!"

The welkin tried to outdo all earlier efforts in the matter of ringing; and the butler and the footmen ran to the house.

The head-groom, leading the horse, arrived first and drew from the purple Stiffgate the stentorian inquiry whether he thought he was going to ride it himself, which rose to a bellow of "Get on it! Fool! Get on it! Idiot! Get on it! Dolt!"

The head-groom scrambled into the saddle, and sat in it with the air of a paralytic. The indefatigable welkin was ringing still, when the butler and the footman arrived with the liquids and the telegram form. Colonel Stiffgate drank off the brandy and soda, and having slaked his tingling throat and restored its tone, looked round for someone to bellow at. He found no

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one, wrote the telegram, and after a short, but from the heart, tribute to his head-groom's imperfect intellectual development, bade him take it to the Beauleigh Post Office without, if possible, breaking his horse's knees.

The groom rode off; Colonel Stiffgate looked after him, and then looked up the hill and down it. This action set springing in the hearts of the children the hope that he would at once visit the other blue posts, and at each give them a further taste of the quality of a fine old English gentleman. To their disgust he turned and stalked towards the Hall, bidding the gardeners shut the gates.

Elsie and Tinker got into the car; Adolphe turned it and set it going towards Beauleigh.

"It will be splendid to see Baldock Bowles at work," said Tinker. "I've often thought how I should like to; but I never expected to get the chance."

"Won't it?" said Elsie. "It *was* a good idea of yours to tell old Stiffgate to send for him."

"I never thought he'd take it from me. Only I thought it worth trying."

"It was," said Elsie. "But suppose Baldock Bowles found us out?"

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"He won't," said Tinker, with the most serene confidence. "Nobody could. And if he did, it would be worth while having a row, just to have seen him at work."

On their way back they passed several of their neighbors in motor cars and carriages on their way to see the blue posts: the faces of all of them were wreathed with expectant smiles, poor tributes to the loveableness of their gallant neighbor.

When they reached Beauleigh, Tinker, finding himself in the mood for the study of psychology, attached himself firmly to Gabriel, who was making an interesting display of the nervousness of a bridegroom. Sir Tancred was also with him, and heard the story of Colonel Stiffgate's exercising the welkin with great pleasure. The fact that Tinker himself had suggested the summoning of the great investigator banished from his mind the unworthy suspicion that his angel child had had a hand in the painting of the posts. Gabriel's attention was for a while diverted by the narration from his impending trial; but very soon after trepidation again seized him, and he entertained them with several tributes to his own unworthiness to have won such a prize as Sonia. Towards the end

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of the last of these his father joined them and heckled him somewhat severely that he, the heir of the World-wide, should have so unbefitting an opinion of his merits.

Just before it was time to start for the church the Lady Noggs, who along with Elsie was to act as bridesmaid, arrived from Stonorill. The necessity of hunting vigorously for the bracelets, which he had bought for them as bridesmaids' gifts, again diverted Gabriel from his nervous terrors. After a quarter of an hour's furious search he found them in the breast pocket of the coat he was wearing. While they were thanking him, he lost the wedding ring, of whose safe presence in his waistcoat pocket he had feverishly assured himself every thirty seconds during the morning. Tinker found it in less than five minutes; he brought his carefully trained powers of observation to bear on the matter, and perceiving that Gabriel spoke rather thickly, elicited the fact that he was carrying it, for greater safety, in his mouth. After that Tinker took the wedding ring; Sir Tancred took Gabriel firmly by the arm, and he did not loose it till he had him safely in the church. The sight of Sonia, rather paler than usual, but exquisitely charming, seemed to brace Gabriel

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and he got through the ceremony without a hitch.

The Lady Noggs and Elsie, who drove back with Tinker, discussed the ceremony with animation till Tinker pointed out that the really important matter in hand was the investigation into the blueness of the blue posts by Baldock Bowles. In order to miss none of this he bade Adolphe wait with the car. They went in and mixed with the wedding party till the health of the bride and bridegroom had been drunk. Then they hurried out into the car and drove off to the scene of the coming investigation.

They had timed the coming of Baldock Bowles very nicely; for as they came down the further side of Stiffgate hill they saw the Colonel's phaeton coming along the road from Micklefield station. The car and the phaeton reached the foot of the hill at the same moment and stopped within a few feet of one another. The children feasted their eyes on the well-known hat and face of the great detective, who sat beside Colonel Stiffgate on the box.

As he got down from his seat they heard him say, "Then if you'll drive on to the Hall, Colonel Stiffgate, I and my friend Dr. Stickles will examine the scene or rather the scenes of

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the crime. That way we shall not attract attention; we shall merely be taken for interested sightseers."

Tinker doubted that they would not attract attention, since, having left town hastily, they were fashionably attired in frock coats and recently ironed top hats. But his attention was diverted from this point by Colonel Stiffgate, who bellowed at him, "Now then, young Beaul Leigh! Clear out! Be off home! I don't want you hanging about here!"

The hectoring attitude in a fellow creature was rarely encouraged by Tinker. He leaned comfortably back in his seat and examined the Colonel's rich, red face with undisguised interest.

"Do you hear what I say?" bellowed the Colonel.

"I could hear it nearly three-quarters of a mile off," said Tinker, with careful accuracy.

"Then be off!" bellowed the Colonel.

"I shan't. This is a public road," said Tinker, with careful distinctness.

"I don't care whether it's a public road or not a public road! You be off, or I'll make you!" bellowed the Colonel; and his face began to empurple under the vocal effort.

"We're wasting time," the great detective

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broke in in his incisive voice. "These children don't matter to me; but the dinner hour will soon be over and we shall have the afternoon sightseers here."

For a moment the Colonel seemed inclined to turn his vocal efforts on him. Then he seemed to check the bellow in his throat, with a rumbling growl whipped up the horses, and drove on up the hill.

"Come along, Stickles," said the great detective; and he took out a notebook, and went with swift, nervous strides to the first blue post, examined the ground at its foot, with an eagle eye, and then examined the paint with a magnifying glass. The children got out of the car and watched him with all their eyes. His friend also watched him with all his eyes, but with a much more sapient air.

Presently the great detective said, "This paint is one of those so-called enamels sold in tins."

"You don't say so, Bowles!" said Dr. Stickles.

The great detective nodded.

"But this is wonderful, Bowles!" said Dr. Stickles.

The great detective opened the gate and ex-

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aminated the turf for thirty yards in a half circle round it, came out of the field, and strode on to the next blue post with swift, nervous strides. Again he examined the ground with his eagle eye and the paint with a magnifying glass.

At the third post he began to wear the air of a man who was not finding what he looked for. The fourth post deepened the expression. As he turned away from it, he said, "Stickles, the footprints have been obliterated with a consummate skill, which shows that we have to deal with master minds of crime."

"You don't say so, Bowles!" cried Dr. Stickles.

But at the fifth post, at which Tinker had spilled a little pool of paint and put half his foot in it, his face suddenly brightened, and his eagle eye, in fact both his eyes, flashed. He dropped on his knees, put down his notebook, pulled out an ivory rule, and began to measure the footprint in every possible way. He measured its length, breadth, and depth, its diagonal, its sides, and its ends. He entered every measurement in his notebook. Then he rose to his feet, read the measurements over with a look of wild amazement, and said, "Stickles, there is more in this than we thought."

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"Ha!" said Dr. Stickles with an incisiveness he had evidently attained from long association with his gifted friend; and his round face assumed an expression of greater sapience than ever.

Baldock Bowles of a sudden and with no apparent effort became the human sleuthhound: his yellowish but ascetic face flushed, his eyes shone out with a steely glitter, his lips were compressed, and his nostrils seemed to dilate with a purely animal love of the chase. His lithe form covered the ground with long nervous strides, of a nervousness indeed which compelled Dr. Stickles and the children to trot after him as he hurried from post to post. By the time they had reached the top of the hill Dr. Stickles had lost his excellent bedside manner and was panting heavily.

Baldock Bowles cast but a look at the blue post of the Hall gates as he passed and said with curt decision.

"We'll leave that to the last."

"Do you think he's found us out?" Elsie whispered.

"No: but I think he's found out something interesting," said Tinker. "And if he has found us out, it's quite worth it, don't you know?"

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"Rather," said the Lady Noggs. "He's splendid."

"Yes; but Tinker will get the whacking," said Elsie.

The great detective hurried from post to post on the further side of the hill with the same feverish energy, but making a thorough examination of each.

At the fourth post he cried, "Ha!" and snatched some hairs from a notch in the top bar of the gate. He examined them through the magnifying glass, measured the length of each with the ivory rule, and put them into the pocket of his notebook.

Then he said in a tone of cold, proud triumph, "I was looking for something of the kind."

"But, Bowles, this is wonderful!" said Dr. Stickles, glaring at him with eyes glistening with a fond and faithful admiration.

The great detective started again with feverish energy, and hurried with long nervous strides from blue post to blue post till he reached the bottom of the hill. There he paused and scanned the surrounding country with his eagle eye.

"Ha! pollard willows! A pond!" he said.

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"Wonderful! Wonderful!" murmured Dr. Stickles.

It lay in the middle of the field, and he set out for it with the long nervous strides of which Elsie at any rate was getting a little tired. He and the children reached it some fifty yards in front of Dr. Stickles. When that fervent soul came up, Baldock Bowles was trying to reach some shining object under the water some four feet from the bank. His reach was not quite long enough, and he snatched Dr. Stickles' cane and carefully fished out a tin. It was of the kind which contain the peaches of California.

Baldock Bowles gazed at it gloomily and said, "Just as I thought—master minds of crime."

Dr. Stickles shook his head with a profound air.

Without another word Baldock Bowles started back to the road at a terrific pace—with long nervous strides—and went up the hill without slackening speed. Tinker kept pace with him; Elsie and the Lady Noggs jumped into the car and followed on their heels; Dr. Stickles was left far behind. At the gates of the Hall Colonel Stiffgate awaited them.

The great detective took no notice of him, but

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examined the blue post. Suddenly with a pather-like spring he leaped upon the gate and glued his eye to the smear of paint by which Tinker had held on while he painted the top of the post. Then he measured the distance from the spike to the post with the ivory rule. Dr. Stickles came up, panting and mopping his more than ample brow, Baldock Bowles leaped down from the gate, and his ascetic face was illumined by a proud, triumphant smile.

"The case is complete," he said to Colonel Stiffgate. "Your posts were painted by a Chinese woman, a gymnast, left-handed, between five feet, and five feet one inch high. You will probably find her in one of those troupes of Chinese conjurors who exhibit on the stages of the London music-halls."

"God bless my soul!" said Colonel Stiffgate.

"But, my dear Bowles, this is marvelous!" said Dr. Stickles.

"B-B-But how—why—how—d-d-did you find out?" stuttered Colonel Stiffgate.

Baldock Bowles drew himself up, faced the group with the air of a lecturer addressing a class, and said, "At first sight, Stickles, the case looked like a trivial hoax which the somewhat cloudy intelligence of our friends the country

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police might have fathomed. But the strangest and most unique things are very often connected not with the large but with the smaller crimes; and this has proved no exception to the rule. I was first struck by the fact that the paint on none of the posts presented a single finger print. This at once excluded Europeans and the inhabitants of the great Western Republic from the category of possible painters. I was disposed to suspect the agency of some trained animal of the baboon kind. They are frequent in the annals of crime; and of course the remarkable case of the murder of the mother and daughter in the Rue Morgue—in Paris—elucidated by my famous prototype, Dupin, is familiar to you. Moreover, there have been at least two of these remarkable animals, Coco and Consul, on the London stage during the last few years. But I have always urged on you the necessity of keeping an open mind till every fact in an inquiry has been observed and considered; and I kept my mind open. If you remember, too, I pointed out the skill with which the footprints round the posts had been obliterated, a fact which seemed to militate against the theory of baboon agency, but does not really, since his trainer would certainly be with him, and would

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no less certainly be careful to obliterate his tell-tale tracks."

The great detective paused to take breath and Dr. Stickles cried, "But, my dear Bowles, this is marvelous!"

"The effort to entirely obliterate the footprints had, however, failed," the great detective continued. "One footprint, one extraordinary footprint was left, and it demonstrated the importance of keeping an open mind: it was the footprint of a Chinese woman—the measurements demonstrated it without a doubt. I knew at once that I was engaged on a similar case to that of the gilded Peacock, or to the disappearance of Colonel de Soissons from Saigon—you will remember them, Stickles. Nothing further rewarded my search till the fourth gate on the other side of the hill. There I found these hairs—there are eight of them." He took them out of his notebook and gazed at them in the peculiar introspective fashion which was characteristic of him. "I have, as you know, devoted some attention to the human hair and written a little monograph on its varieties, which I flatter myself has been of use to those investigating the character of hairs found on lethal weapons employed in homicides. No expert

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could be in doubt for a moment that these hairs are Mongolian—their curious texture forbids any other supposition. Moreover, their presence at that particular gate enabled me to deduce other facts important to the inquiry. It was plain that the woman was beginning to grow tired, and as she painted had leaned her head against the top bar of the gate; her pigtail had caught in the notch, which had torn some hairs out of it. Her weariness at this point proved that she had begun the work at the Micklefield, and consequently the London end of the hill, and had not come from Hull, or Liverpool, or Glasgow, the other ports at which Asiatics chiefly land. Then we come to the final link in the inquiry this post here. At first sight it leads to another extraordinary conclusion—the conclusion that it was painted by a Chinese woman between six feet three and six feet four inches high.”

“But my dear Bowles, this is marvelous!”

Dr. Stickles broke in.

“My dear Stickles, it's not marvelous, it's impossible. No Chinese women six feet two inches high, much less six feet three or four, could have been in a quiet country neighborhood like this without exciting attention. We should

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have heard of her from Colonel Stiffgate on our way from the station. No: this gate post would have been too much for, shall I say, the ordinary investigator. But really it supplies the facts which complete the inquiry. The woman stood on the middle bar of the gate holding on by the fourth spike from the end. This action does away with the necessity of her being between six feet three or four inches high; it reduces her height by at least two feet two inches; and what is more it adds the new fact, which limits the inquiry still more, that she was a gymnast accustomed to athletic feats. One thing more," he added quickly, keeping them silent with a wave of his hand. "If you observe, you will see that she hung on to the gate with her right hand, using her left to paint. The painting is the more difficult action of the two, and she would use her most capable hand for it—we deduce therefore that she was left-handed."

"God bless my soul!" said Colonel Stiffgate.

"But this is marvelous, my dear Bowles, marvelous!" cried Dr. Stickles.

"Naturally, Colonel Stiffgate, you will look for such a woman in one of those troupes of Chinese conjurors and contortionists which are

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at times so popular with music-hall audiences. Having set them on the right path, I can leave her identification and arrest to the official police—it is merely a matter of routine work and should present no difficulty even to their somewhat limited intelligence. We can now with perfectly easy minds turn our attention to lunch.”

He waved his hand to the children with the easy geniality for which he was remarkable, took the arm of the unresisting Colonel, who had something of the air of being dazed, and followed by Dr. Stickles, led him towards the Hall.

The children got into the car in solemn silence. Elsie and the Lady Noggs kept looking at one another, and then together at Tinker. Tinker's face was that of a seraphic sphinx.

Halfway down the hill Elsie said in a hushed voice, “But—but—they were horsehairs.”

Tinker began to laugh.

THE END

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